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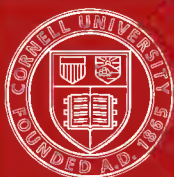
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**The history of woman, her connexion with**



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THE  
HISTORY OF WOMAN,  
AND HER CONNEXION  
WITH  
RELIGION, CIVILIZATION, AND DOMESTIC MANNERS,  
FROM THE EARLIEST PERIOD.

BY S. W. FULLOM,  
AUTHOR OF "THE MARVELS OF SCIENCE," "THE GREAT HIGHWAY,"  
ETC. ETC.

*Second Edition, Revised.*

IN TWO VOLUMES.

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TO

HER MAJESTY,

THE QUEEN OF HANOVER,

THIS WORK IS,

WITH HER MAJESTY'S MOST GRACIOUS PERMISSION.

—

RESPECTFULLY DEDICATED,

BY HER MAJESTY'S MOST HUMBLE, MOST DEVOTED, AND

MOST GRATEFUL SERVANT,

STEPHEN WATSON FULLOM.



PREFACE

TO

THE SECOND EDITION.

---

WITHIN a few weeks, this work has reached a second edition ; and thus I have been afforded an opportunity of going carefully over the sheets, and making such corrections as, on reconsideration, have seemed desirable. These, however, have been purely verbal ; and, in all essential respects, the book remains wholly the same.

The plan of the work has received the warm approval of the press, which has again awarded me a distinguished reception ; and I cannot but express, in this place, how much I am gratified by its verdict.

S. W. F.

20 Chalcot Terrace, Primrose Hill,  
March 17, 1855.



## PREFACE.

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AT a moment when the social position of woman is daily becoming a question of greater and more general interest, it seems not inopportune to look back at her past history, and ascertain what has been the effect of the female character on human progress at particular periods, and under different degrees of civilization. This is the principal object of the following pages ; but I have, at the same time, connected with the narrative a glance at the prevailing laws, religions, and systems of government of the various leading races, with the design of

affording a rapid view of the history of society from the earliest epoch.

In a book aiming at popular circulation, notes would be an incumbrance, serving to harass and perplex, without instructing the reader. I have, therefore, when it has appeared necessary, mentioned the authorities for my statements in the text, but, should it be thought desirable, they can be given more fully in foot notes in a future edition.

S. W. F.

20 *Chalcot Terrace, Primrose Hill,*  
*January 1855.*

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# THE HISTORY OF WOMAN.

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## I.

### THE ANTEDILUVIAN AGES.

OF the earliest period of human history, the only knowledge we possess is comprised in five chapters of the Book of Genesis; and, with this brief narrative before us, it is difficult to realise the fact that the time thus embraced is two thousand years, or more than a third of the whole interval since the creation of man. If we consider what events have happened in the world during the eighteen centuries which have elapsed since the coming of our Saviour—

how empires have risen and fallen, religions disappeared, and entire races been swept away—we shall better understand how very faintly this slight record represents the annals of the antediluvian nations. Colossal monarchies must have grown up, wars and conflicts have raged, great characters have flourished, religious creeds, differing from any of which we have cognizance, enslaved the hearts of superstitious millions; yet of all not a memorial remains, to indicate that they have ever existed. What progress had been made in civilization—whether mankind yet possessed any literature, and how far they were acquainted with the arts and sciences, must for ever remain a mystery, baffling even conjecture; but it cannot be doubted that the great longevity of the antediluvian patriarchs, extending their lives over many centuries, was eminently favourable to the diffusion of knowledge. Astronomy especially must soon have attracted the attention of wandering tribes, as they made their way into the unexplored wilderness, with no

guides but the stars of heaven ; and the twelve constellations, which still serve as landmarks on the map of the firmament, were, if tradition may be relied on, first traced out by antediluvian sages. We are told in Genesis of the invention of music, for which we are indebted to Jubal, son of Lamech, and of the skill of Tubal as an artificer in brass ; while Josephus mentions that the children of Seth, learning from Adam that the world was to be destroyed by a flood, erected two pillars, one of stone, and the other of brick, as a memorial of their achievements, and which, by their structure and form, would seem to augur no slight acquaintance with architecture.

If so much uncertainty attaches to the condition of man during this long round of ages, that of woman is involved in far greater obscurity. Of her, little mention is made beyond two or three passing allusions, which, however, intimate, if vaguely, that she sometimes played no mean part in the transactions of the time. On more than one occasion indeed she became the agent of

incidents, which still influence the destinies of the world.

It would be worse than idle to inquire whether the account given by Moses of the creation of woman is to be received in a literal sense, or merely as a parable, typifying, by imagery as striking as it is apt, the character of her relations with man. Josephus, it is true, observes that the sacred historian now began "to talk philosophically," whence some may infer that the ancient sages of Israel inclined to the latter opinion; but this, while it is immaterial as a matter of fact, will always be open to dispute. One thing is clear—that the creation of woman was posterior to that of man, although, in truth, it was designed and predetermined at the same time; for we are expressly told that "God created man in his own image: in the image of God created he him—male AND FEMALE created he THEM." And though Eve was placed in the world at a later period, it is hence apparent, and obviously intended to be understood, that her nature and mission

were already defined by the Almighty, who waited only the proper moment to associate her indissolubly with man.

That time had arrived when Adam, with every enjoyment at his command, found even the blest shades of Eden were wearisome, without the sympathy of a companion. He had passed in review every living creature, and, in all this variety of beings, saw none qualified to cheer his solitude or engage his affections. Then it was that, pitying his loneliness—perhaps, yielding to his prayers, the Almighty presented him his predestined associate, in whom he beheld a striking and beautiful reflection of himself, softened by the delicate lines of female loveliness.

The emotions of Eve in her first sense of existence could only be conceived by the sublime muse of Milton :—

“That day I oft remember, when from sleep  
I first awaked, and found myself reposed  
Under a shade on flowers, much wondering where  
And what I was, whence thither brought, and how !”

The abode of the chosen pair was designed

expressly with a view to their peculiar condition and requirements. Planted by the hand of God, the garden of Eden contained, we are told, "every tree that was pleasant to the sight and good for food." Groves and sylvan glades, affording a grateful refuge from the heats of noon, margined a gentle and limpid stream, which flowed through the midst of this Paradise, here laving slopes of velvet turf, there almost meeting the flowers that drooped over its waters. Gold sparkled in its depths, and its banks were strewn with precious gems, described by Moses as the bdellium and the onyx. Birds of every plumage, yet undaunted by the presence of man, flitted from tree to tree, while others made the woods resound with their melody; and so mild and genial was the climate, that our first parents walked at will through every part of the garden, robed only in their own innocence. Plato, in his *Symposiacs*, which embody the heathen tradition of Eden, on this point confirms the testimony of Moses, stating that the happy parents of man went uncovered, and exposed

to the seasons, which, indeed, bringing neither cold nor storms, they had no reason to fear.

There has been much useless speculation as to the site of Eden, which some place in the moon, and others in the mid-air, like Mohammed's coffin; but which, in fact, was specifically marked out by Moses, according to boundaries then perfectly understood, and no doubt handed down from the elder world. All trace of its existence was, of course, completely effaced by the Deluge, and even the four rivers of Moses now baffle identity, but Sir William Jones, the eminent Eastern scholar and antiquary, locates the terrestrial paradise in Persia; and the hypothesis derives a sanction from the phrase "eastward of Assyria," which appears to have hitherto escaped observation. The Garden of Adonis and the Elysian Fields of the heathens preserved an imperfect tradition of its beauty and its pleasures.

The happy retreat was too soon invaded by the power of evil, which taking a visible form, inaugurated the history of mankind

with a triumph over woman's weakness. Here again we are met by a narrative, which different critics receive both in a figurative and literal sense, but which, viewed in either way, is a sad memorial of our frailty and infirmity. Eve fell—as woman usually falls—a victim to treachery, falsehood, and fraud. Yet even then, there appears to be no warrant for casting on her the whole burden of the fatal transgression; and it may reasonably be questioned whether our sterner sex, which has so long exonerated itself from blame, is really entitled to such a verdict. Though the Tempter addressed himself to Eve, Adam seems to have been present, and to have lent by his silence a tacit sanction to the discussion. The words are—“she took of the fruit, and did eat, and gave also unto her husband WITH HER.” What more likely indeed than that they should be together!—reclining under the shadow of that tree so “pleasant to the sight,” in the midst of the garden, and, perhaps, on the bank of the peaceful stream by which it was watered. And where could Adam be, if



not with his sole companion, with whom he shared, not only every pursuit, but every moment of his life? From Eve's hands, however, he received the fatal fruit, and on her he endeavoured to throw the responsibility and the punishment.

It was "in the cool of the day"—in the evening, as gathering shadows spread over the earth, that the awful sentence was pronounced. Woman was degraded from her first mission, and made, instead of an equal, a slave, while both she and the man were driven from the home of their innocence, which they had violated by their fall. Amidst the terrors of night they entered a vast and unknown world, to hide their unsheltered heads in some dismal cave, or gloomy forest. Morning dawned only to expose their wretchedness, and contrast it with the blessings they had lost.

The first story of human trial was a sad earnest of what was to follow. . Unwillingness to linger near the scene of their former happiness, or, perhaps, a fear of the flaming sword at the entrance of the garden, remind-

ing them of the terrible denunciation that they should “surely die,” may have urged the wretched exiles to wander far in quest of a new home, and they are supposed to have finally settled in India. Here, while Adam tilled the ungrateful ground, obtaining from its produce a precarious and perhaps a scanty subsistence, Eve was overtaken by the pangs of maternity, in her case unalleviated by the soothing ministrations of later times. The children born in sorrow, were reared in suffering; and if the mother felt joy in her new ties, could she forget, in her brightest moments, the fate predicted for her offspring? In the fulness of maternal love she had given her first-born the name of Cain, or *possession*, as if this new treasure consoled her for every bereavement; but she appears to have been quickly undeceived, and the name of Abel, or VANITY, the designation of her second son, emphatically proclaims its own moral. Often, indeed, must her mind have been haunted by the most anxious forebodings, painting the future in the darkest colours, yet surely her worst

fears could never have anticipated the event, that one of those sons she had so tenderly cherished and so carefully reared—that a being so gentle as Abel, whose blameless nature her partial eye surveyed only too fondly, should perish by the hand of the dark and rugged Cain, was a blow by which any parent might have been crushed, but which fell with peculiar force on the mother of mankind.

From the Scripture account we learn that Eve had afterwards a numerous family, and Josephus mentions that she gave birth to “many other children,” while an old tradition asserts that she was the mother of thirty-three sons and twenty-three daughters. It is rather significant of the degraded condition of woman after the fall, that no allusion is made in the Scriptures to the birth of Eve’s daughters, and although Cain’s wife, who must have been one of his sisters, is referred to more than once, her name is never mentioned. So completely was the sex ignored in the ascendancy of man, that Eve herself, except on the occasion of the

birth of Seth, is passed over in silence, and we are not even told of her death.

Abel appears to have left a numerous family, since Cain, in his interview with the Almighty, expresses a fear for his life, as if apprehending the vengeance of his brother's children; and from the incidental allusions to the erection of cities, we are justified in believing that the world now contained a considerable population. An ingenious French author, writing in the *Journal de Paris*, calculates that if Adam and Eve possessed 8 children in their 25th year, in their 50th these 8 might have given birth to 64, which in their 74th year would yield 583, in their 98th 4096, and in their 120th their descendants would amount to 32,800. Cain probably murdered Abel just before the birth of Seth, as Eve, in naming the latter, observes—"God hath appointed me another seed instead of Abel, whom Cain slew," and this was in the 130th year of Adam's life.

The brief allusion to Adah and Zillah, the wives of Lamech, would appear to afford us but little, if any, information as to the pro-

gress made by woman in lightening or relaxing the yoke which had been placed upon her, yet we may gather that the endearing ties of nature were beginning to soften the rigour and the ignominy of her position. Man had learnt that it was to her he must turn when, in the wild paroxysms of sorrow or remorse, his heart craved for consolation, and Lamech confided to the sympathy of his wives the sad tale of his rashness and his crime. Yet we discover, at the same time, that another element had been introduced into the social fabric, which, while it could not but prove a germ of domestic discord, must have tended materially to lessen, and ultimately to arrest the growing influence of the sex. Within a thousand years from the creation—perhaps while the mother of mankind was yet living—polygamy, the fruitful source of so many ills, had become an established practice, and man had already converted the most sacred institution of nature into a reproach and an abuse. The effect of this proceeding was soon apparent in the general corruption of morals, which, at

length, attained a pitch of debasement surpassing the imagination of modern times. Heathen writers, no less than the inspired historian, bear testimony to this melancholy truth, and the fabulous pages of Catullus and the *Metamorphoses* of Ovid might almost have borrowed their assertions from Holy Writ. The violence which overspread the earth had made woman at once its provocation and its victim. But a beauty almost seraphic, while it excited and invited attack, invested her weakness with irresistible charms, and there is reason to believe that she numbered even angels among her suitors. Our degenerate conceptions fail to realise the matchless graces of person and feature which could effect such a prodigious result. We may, indeed, conclude, without extravagance, that the human form divine then possessed a nobler organization, proportioned in vigour to its more extended term of existence ; and the beauty which retained its freshness through the lapse of centuries, must assuredly have been of a higher and more ethereal character.

“ There were giants in those days,” and perhaps the stature of mankind generally, like the mould in which they were cast, was much in advance of the present standard. The original type of our first parents must still have been universal ; and, as the antediluvian races occupied comparatively only a small portion of the globe, they were not subjected to the same influences of climate which have operated with baneful effect in later times. The very face of the earth was differently constituted, and the curse of sterility called for all man’s energy to develop its fruits. From the time of Cain, who is said to have invented the plough, the manual employments of agriculture must have made a material impression on the human frame, and to these were too soon added the arduous exercises of war. Yet the posterity of Seth probably still followed the calling of shepherds, and, in their long and solitary night watches, drew out the first rude outlines of astronomy.

Pausanias, Philostratus, Ovid, and Pliny, differing on other mythological points, all

preserve a tradition relative to the giants ; and if we recognise the incarnation of Satan in the serpent, at the temptation, we cannot repudiate the de-spiritualization of angels — “ the sons of God,” or, perhaps, spirits already fallen, on the occasion of the evidently-sacrilegious union with “ the daughters of men.” Indeed, so late as the time of the Apostles, St. Paul admonishes his female disciples to keep their heads covered—that is, to wear a veil, “ for fear of the angels,” which seems to warrant the same interpretation ; and, in the Apocrypha, Tobit’s niece is represented as being loved by an evil spirit, who successively killed her husbands on the nuptial day, till, by prayer and sacrifice, she was delivered from his toils. The promulgation of the Christian dispensation finally put an end to such spiritual manifestations.

It was to his wives that the prophet Lamech is said to have first revealed the intention of God to destroy the world by a flood ; and he is stated in Genesis to have predicted, at the birth of Noah, that his



new-born son would be made an instrument to restore the fertility of the soil. "This same shall comfort us," he exclaims, "concerning the work and toil of our hands, because of the ground which the Lord hath cursed." Josephus asserts that Lamech was the father, by his two wives, of seventy-seven children, of whose names only five have been preserved, and but one of these—Naamah—is claimed by a woman. The gentle shepherd Jabal, who loved the peaceful solitude of his tent, and the minstrel Jubal, whose invention of the trumpet we still record in the word *jubilee*, were the children of his wife Ada; and the fierce warrior Tubal, who "excelled in strength," and was the first to fashion arms and instruments of metal, was the son of Zillah. We are not told who was the mother of Noah, but doubtless it was one of these favoured women.

As Noah was six hundred years old at the time of the Deluge, it is probable that his brothers and sisters, numerous as they were, had all died before that epoch, but certain

it is that none accompanied him into the Ark. His warnings and admonitions seemed indeed but idle words to a world given up to every wickedness that universal depravity could suggest. “There were marriages and giving in marriage,” up to the very morning of the Flood, when the inspired Patriarch, obeying the Divine injunction, took his sons and his wife and his sons’ wives,—in all four women, and entered the Ark. The shore they were next to behold was in a new world.

## II.

## THE PATRIARCHAL PERIOD.

OF the second foundress of the human race—the wife of Noah—the Scriptures do not so much as mention the name, though the heathens, in their myth of Deucalion, give her that of Pyrrha. From the moment she quitted the ark, neither she nor the wives of her three sons, by whose offspring “the whole earth was overspread,” are once referred to; and women still held so subordinate a place, that it is not till many years after the Deluge, when we learn that Arphaxad, the son of Shem, had sons *and daughters*, that there is even any specific acknowledgment of their existence. About three hundred and fifty years after the Flood, the names of Sarai and Milcah are preserved, making five women during some twenty centuries, reckoning from the creation, who have been admitted to that dis-

tion—namely, Eve, our first mother, Ada and Zillah, the wives of Lamech, and lastly Sarai and Milcah themselves.

It is at the foot of Mount Ararat, the last link in the Caucasian chain, and on the fruitful plain of Nakshivan, which, in its Armenian appellation, still commemorates “the first resting-place,” that tradition has laid the cradle of the human race. For a time the patriarchal family clung tenaciously to this favoured spot, where the melon and the vine, whose juice was first compressed by Noah, still attain unequalled excellence. The enriched soil no longer demanded incessant tillage; the herbage of the mountains afforded abundant pasture for their flocks; and they naturally lingered in a locality memorable as the scene of their deliverance, and endeared by the most tender associations.

But increased numbers, while it weakened these ties, created the necessity of dispersion. In the third generation from Noah, we find Nimrod, the son of Cush, building a city, afterwards renowned by its name of

Babel ; and in the time of Peleg, two generations later, mankind had become so numerous, that land, hitherto appropriated at will, began to be divided, or parcelled out to tribes and families as their special property. More serious innovations followed ; Kings established despotic power ; wars and forays, terminating in the captivity of vanquished tribes, introduced the unnatural custom of slavery ; and violence began to resume its ancient sway over the sons of men.

Not till the time of Abraham have we any information as to the position of woman in this advancing civilization. Then we find, from isolated incidents, that her condition, except in the highest grade, was still one of subjection and servitude ; and, in another point of view, the domestic history of the patriarch evinces a strange misconception, among all ranks, of the sacred nature of matrimony. That the ties of consanguinity were not yet considered a bar to marriage, we have proof in the case of Sarah, who was the half sister of her hus-

band Abraham; and Nahor, their brother, by marrying Milcah, the daughter of his brother Haran, became the husband of his own niece. Indeed, long afterwards we find these family marriages persevered in, with the avowed object of preserving purity of race, though experience has proved, in the lapse of ages, that the effect invariably tends to produce physical and mental degeneracy, incapacity, and sterility.

There is reason to believe that the worship of one supreme God, though not universal, was still very general among men; and a code of morals similar to that embodied in the Decalogue, was taught and enforced by the Seven Precepts of Noah. Polygamy, however, does not appear to have been actually forbidden, though there are examples of holy men who offered in their lives a silent protest against its continuance; and it is a remarkable circumstance that the domestic happiness of Abraham knew no interruption, till he violated the sanctity of the marriage tie. We must consider it a strange inversion of natural

feelings that he should have been prompted to this step by Sarah herself; and as she would seem, from the subsequent conduct of Leah and Rachel, to have been only following a general and authorized custom, the incident becomes a melancholy testimony to the degraded condition of the sex in those primitive ages.

In all these cases we behold the "bond-woman" placed absolutely at the disposal of her mistress, even in that relation of life which most deeply interests the will, the sympathies, and the feelings. Snatched from their home, perhaps from the roof of a wealthy and indulgent parent by some predatory band, young girls were sold into slavery, severed from their kindred and friends, transported into a distant land, and given over, body and soul, to the arbitrary rule of a foreign master. Can we imagine a more touching picture of human wrong? Yet such was the institution already established in the world, and recognized even in the household of Abraham.

Though the story of the patriarch's life is

so familiar, it may be worth pausing on the episode of Hagar, to educe, from its suggestive incidents, another feature in the condition of her class. The birth of a son had undoubtedly added to the importance, if it had not enhanced the dignity of her equivocal position; but the very event whence Sarah had expected to derive an accession of felicity, was converted by human weakness into a source of discord. Abraham, by yielding to her indiscreet suggestions, which could only have sprung from a want of faith in the Divine promise, had made his once-peaceful tent the scene of constant bickerings, subversive alike of his happiness and his authority. In such a tissue of recriminations, the sage was unable to pronounce a just verdict; and while affection and a sense of right inclined him to the side of his wife, the weakness of Hagar eloquently claimed his protection. It was God who, after promising to secure the future welfare of Hagar, directed him to expel the imprudent bondwoman from his household. Thus we see that the female



captive, after submitting to the last indignity and the last oppression, could be cast with her offspring, destitute and friendless on the world, and doubtless often perished in the desert, when there was no beneficent angel, as in Hagar's case, to soothe, counsel, and save.

The sacred historian clearly intimates that the sex were still endowed, as before the Flood, with a wonderful power of retaining their beauty, and Sarah's personal charms were unimpaired at what we should now consider a very advanced age. Even on the plain of Canaan, where, under the shadow of the oak Ogyges, Abraham had pitched his tent, "the fame of his wife's beauty," says Josephus, "was greatly talked of," and she was in her ninetieth year when, on the occasion of Abraham's second visit to Egypt, she made so dangerous an impression on King Abimelech. This incident serves to illustrate how little security was then enjoyed even by women of the highest rank. An Arabian emir, or prince, travelling with a powerful retinue, is afraid to acknowledge

himself the husband of a beautiful woman, lest, on some specious pretext, he should be put to death, and his wife seized by the reigning despot. His apprehensions were in part realized, and Sarah, as soon as she had set foot in Egypt, was carried off from the midst of her family, in defiance alike of the usages of hospitality and the common laws of society. Such was the boasted virtue of patriarchal times!

The book of Job seems to establish that, in pastoral communities, it was not from want of knowing what was just and right that men perpetuated this bondage of the feebler creation. In the midst of his sorrows and sufferings, the stricken prince, undoubtedly the most beautiful character which the whole history of mankind can furnish, touchingly alludes to his honourable treatment of the sex, in a strain not the less chivalrous from its simplicity and pathos. Modern civilization can add nothing to the refined gold of his sentiments, or to his delicate appreciation of woman's helplessness and weakness. And it is important to observe,

in connexion with this subject, that Job lived in the native country of Abraham, almost within the same distance from Egypt, and in a subsequent, and, consequently, less virtuous, because less religious age. The land of Idumæa, or Edom, where the venerable emir resided, was the first refuge of philosophy, learning, and the arts. Even in those early days, its city of Teman was famed for the wisdom of her sons: its opulent merchants, as Job himself tells us, travelled far and near on their adventurous errands of traffic; it had its mint, its monuments, its public inscriptions, and its *books*! If many were “secretly enticed,” when “they beheld the sun as it shone, or the moon walking in brightness,” to worship the heavenly luminaries, Job and his friends still acknowledged but the one true God. Polygamy, sanctioned by the practice of neighbouring nations, appears to have been discountenanced here. Job had but one wife, and to her he tenderly clung, even when, in the depth of her anguish, she loaded him with bitter taunts and reproaches. His sons and

daughters were brought up on an equal footing; they shared the same indulgences; and when the young men commemorated their birthdays with a feast, they sent, we are told, "for their sisters, to eat and drink with them." After Job's restoration to prosperity, the daughters of his second family, described as excelling all others in grace and beauty, were admitted to an equal share in the family patrimony. Their very names are an evidence of the tender affection of their father; and Jemima, "fair as the day," Kezia, "precious as cassia," and Kerenhappuch, "splendid as the emerald," though appellations sufficiently expressive, say not more for the personal charms of the damsels than for the refined feelings of their parent.

In the pastoral ages, it was customary for women, even of the highest rank, to engage in employments which would now be considered derogatory, if not menial, and which, indeed, the humblest of the sex have long ceased to follow. So late as the time of Moses, we find the daughters of Raguel, or

Jethro, the priest of Midian, a man “thought worthy by the people of the country of great honour,” taking care of their father’s flocks, “which sort of work,” says Josephus, “it was customary and very familiar for the women of Midian to do.” Some portion of their task appears to have required no light hands; and on bringing their flocks to water they are described as first drawing the limpid element from the well, and then pouring it into deep troughs, from which the parched herds quenched their thirst. In this employment they were frequently interrupted by shepherds having charge of rival droves, and who, after Raguel’s daughters had drawn the water, seized the overflowing troughs, and compelled the terrified maidens to retire. It was on one of these occasions that they were befriended by Moses, who happened to be passing, and with a gallantry not lost upon Zipporah, the eldest of the sisters, came to their assistance, and put their unmanly assailants to flight.

Another employment of women in the pas-

toral ages was needlework, which is referred to at a very early period by the mother of Sisera (Judges iv. 30) as she sat with her "wise ladies" awaiting the return of her son. The distaff, probably a relic of the antediluvian world, preserved with other useful implements in the Ark, may also have been common, as even the loom and shuttle are alluded to in the book of Job.

The task of drawing water for the supply of the household appears to have been universally assigned to women; and, indeed, it is, with other early burdens, still imposed on the sex in many parts of the East. When Abraham's servant approached Haran, to which he had been sent by his master to procure a wife for Isaac, he met the maidens of the city coming to draw water at a neighbouring well, and foremost in the train was Rebekah, whose brother, Laban, was one of the magnates of the country. Nearly two thousand years later, we find the woman of Samaria—who, however, occupied a far inferior station—engaged in a similar employment, and met by the Redeemer with the

same request which Abraham's jaded servant so confidently addressed to Rebekah.

Rebekah's conversation at the well with her uncle's messenger shows that the social intercourse of the sexes was not fettered in those days by the restraints, which now, as for many generations past, form the most arbitrary institution of the East. While the old man appeared to her in the light of a perfect stranger, a traveller of humble rank, who gave no clear account of himself, she freely answered all his questions respecting her family, communicating the most minute particulars of their circumstances and condition ; and she even did not hesitate to receive from him, according to Josephus, who perfectly accords with Moses, a pair of costly bracelets, and "some other ornaments esteemed decent for virgins to wear," amongst which, perhaps, were earrings, fillets of gold for the ankles, and the more fantastic trinket called the nose-jewel, one of the first acquisitions of the female toilet.

Among other articles of apparel, the veil, now so universal among Eastern ladies, was

already partially adopted, particularly by women remarkable for their beauty, and King Abimelech recommends Sarah to adopt “a covering to the eyes,” by which she will be preserved from the danger of the public gaze. For many ages afterwards, however, the veil was only worn on grand occasions, or by a maiden in the presence of her betrothed. Thus Rebekah, on first discerning Isaac, as she approached the residence of Abraham, is described as assuming this modest adornment (Genesis xxiv. 65). “For she had said unto the servant, What man is this that walketh in the field to meet us? And the servant had said it is my master. Therefore, *she took a veil*, and covered herself.” After an interval of five or six centuries, Ruth, having been enjoined by her mother-in-law to “anoint herself, and put her raiment upon her”—that is, to assume her gayest apparel, is mentioned as wearing a veil; and Boaz desires her “to bring hither *thy veil which is upon thee*, and hold it.”

Women lived in separate lodgings from



the male portion of a family, and probably each occupied a distinct apartment or tent, as we read of "Sarah's tent," "Rebekah's tent," and "the tent of Sarah's maid-servant." Sisera, flying from the field of battle, considered that he would be safe in the tent of Jael, which, being the women's apartment, or harem, his pursuers, who were at peace with her husband Heber, would not venture to invade.

The arrangements for the union of Rebekah and Isaac show how marriages were contracted in that remote era. Abraham had forwarded some costly presents to the maiden's family, "such things as were there in esteem, on account that they either rarely or never were seen in that country;" and as the servant afterwards produces "precious ornaments for women," which he wishes Rebekah to take under her special charge, we may conclude that in providing the propitiatory gifts, due consideration was evinced for the bride. The presents to her family, or rather to her brother, formed her dowry, which was received as an offering from the

bridegroom, who thus, as it were, made a settlement on his betrothed. Jacob served seven years for each of his wives, and Shechem, son of King Hamor, when he sought the hand of Dinah from her father, is reported to have said, "Ask me never so much dowry and gift, and I will give according as ye shall say unto me ; but give me the damsel to wife." As to the existence of any affection between the plighted couple, no one gave a thought to such a romantic subject ; nor, indeed, could it well enter into their calculations, as the young persons were rarely permitted to see each other till the irrevocable engagement was contracted. Rebekah, in her conversation with Abraham's servant, holds herself completely at the disposal of her brother, as the representative of her deceased father, emphatically describing him as "the guardian of her maidenhood ;" and, to say truth, she seems eager to resign country, kindred, and friends, to bid an eternal farewell to the ancestral roof, for the sake of the unknown Isaac. But women appear to have been

reared in that age with these feelings, regarding marriage as their first object in life, and considering that their hand was to be given, not from inclination or affection, but as the will of their father might dictate.

Music was from a very early time a favourite addition to the marriage entertainment, as to any other festivity; and Laban reproaches Jacob that, by stealing away, he had prevented him from celebrating his departure “with mirth and songs, with the tabaret and harp.” Musical instruments were no doubt among the articles preserved in the Ark, as a great variety are found to exist within two or three centuries from the Flood. In the book of Job reference is made to the harp, lute, tabor, and pipe; and the line “they trip merrily to the sound of the pipe,” shows that women, by their natural instinct for the graceful and beautiful, had already mastered the bewitching movements of the dance.

The family of Laban, after an interval of about half a century from the marriage of his sister Rebekah, furnishes us with another

glimpse of the nuptial customs of the day, when the patriarch urges as a reason for not giving Jacob the hand of Rachel, that such a thing was impossible while Leah, her elder sister, remained unmarried, as it would be an infringement of the established custom of the country. The marriage-festivities lasted seven days, as we learn from Laban desiring, in his colloquy with Jacob, that Leah should "fulfil her week." Polygamy appears by this time to have become an orthodox institution. Of the two sons of Isaac, Esau had married two wives, Adah and Aholibamah ; and Jacob, at the instigation of his father-in-law, married two sisters, in whom the instincts of natural affection were thus violated and destroyed. The peace of the domestic hearth was the cruel penalty of this impious union, and in the bad passions aroused, Rachel and Leah, sacrificing love itself to the purposes of revenge, introduced, by means of their two handmaids, another element of discord into their unhappy and divided household.

But though polygamy received the high

countenance of Abraham and Jacob, and was afterwards sanctioned by the example, though not by the laws of Moses, it was not unfrequently repudiated by the strong impulse of human affection, evincing that love when sincere, must also be pure. In a much later, but still a pastoral age, the kinsman of Ruth is represented as refusing her hand, on the plea that he already had a wife; and he relinquishes a rich inheritance rather than contract a second engagement with a young and beautiful woman. Indeed, it is but too apparent that men were fully sensible of the injustice and baneful effects of polygamy from the earliest times; but then, as in after ages, they were accustomed to follow the bent of their own inclinations, in preference to the holy dictates of religion and morality.

Female depravity exhibited its lowest depth among the Troglodytes, who are described so early as the time of Job as but little removed from the brutes of the field. "They were driven forth," says the venerable mourner, "from among men, to dwell

in the caves of the earth and in the rocks. Among the bushes they are born ; under the nettles they were gathered together : they are viler than the earth." The Troglodytes appear to be the same people who are referred to by Herodotus, as living in the Egyptian desert, and whose treatment of women, here degraded even lower than themselves, he mentions with indignant horror. Josephus calls the region between Egypt and Midian "the country of the Troglodytes ;" and Strabo locates them "on that side of the Arabian Gulf next to Egypt and Ethiopia." They are alluded to by Homer under the name of the Erembi.

In striking contrast with the Troglodytes, or "dwellers in caverns," the early Egyptian monuments have preserved to us a vestige of another primitive people, who, though doubtless a pastoral community of the East, had apparently attained a high degree of civilization. This lost race differed not only in feature, but in complexion, from other nations of Oriental origin, their colour being light, while their noses were straighter,

their hair brown, and their eyes blue. The women had made considerable progress in the arts of the toilet, and a lady's flowing robe, girded by a zone round the waist, was now graced by three flounces ! The hair of the matrons was worn under a cap, decorated with a tassel, and among young women, it was simply inclosed by a band, and fell in long ringlets on the shoulders.

On the whole, the condition of woman in the pastoral ages may be considered an insecure, if not an unhappy one. Exposed to the horrors of slavery ; liable like Sarah to be snatched from the side of her husband by any unscrupulous tyrant ; or, like Dinah, to be subjected to still greater violence, she was, on the other hand, neither permitted to consult her affections on the important question of marriage, nor secure, after entering that state, of a proper position in her husband's household. High birth did not exempt her from the most menial employments, and her social training was marked by the absence of all those delicate perceptions, which constitute one of the best safeguards of innocence and virtue.

## III.

## ANCIENT EGYPT.

THE cradle of civilization was Egypt. As far back as human records and human art extend—from the earliest dawn of tradition, her name is lisped forth by the infant world in familiar accents, as that of a famous kingdom ; and though the term “first of the nations” is applied in Scripture to Idumæa, or Edom, there is no ground for believing that the civilization of the Edomites could compare with that of the Egyptians, however they may have excelled them in antiquity. Of Hamite origin, the Egyptians may have separated from the other descendants of Noah about the time of the building of



Babel, when perhaps the feebler tribes of mankind, unable to offer any active resistance to their oppressors, sought to escape by flight from the labour and dangers of that undertaking. This hypothesis, indeed, is hardly reconcilable with the passion of the Egyptians for building, to which they gave such free rein in their new country, and to which, indeed, we are indebted for the most minute details of their social, domestic, and personal history. As they deemed nothing too small, or too mean, for enrolment on their monuments, these venerable relics constitute as complete a key to their manners, customs, and institutions, their attainments and their resources, as the most ardent antiquary could desire, and, in fact, we have dug up from their tombs all the domestic usages and religious rites, the war-like exercises, the courtly pomp and circumstance, and even the population of the ancient world.

The Egyptians dated their history from an era as remote as the fabulous chronicles of the Chinese ; and Herodotus mentions, in

his second book, that they placed the introduction of Hercules among their gods as far back as seventeen thousand years before the reign of Amasis. Their numerous alleged dynasties would hardly cover so vast a period ; and even these are inadmissible as any evidence of the lapse of time, since it was not till the Shepherd invasion that the whole of Egypt was united under one sovereign, and, from the confused accounts, it may now be inferred that the various dynasties represented a succession, not of different families, but of contemporaneous rulers. Tradition, in this instance a reliable witness, assigns the foundation of the kingdom to Misraim, the son of Ham, 59 years after the dispersion of Babel, and 193 years before the birth of Abraham ; and it is a singular circumstance that the earliest Egyptian remains go no further back than the era of Abraham. Nor is it likely that Moses, who was skilled in "all the learning of the Egyptians," would have so lost sight of their chronology in his computation of time, had it rested on

correct data ; and, from his silence, we may conclude that it was not then promulgated, but was one of the weak inventions of a later age.

Error and delusion, indeed, were the natural offspring of a system which confined all knowledge to the priests, investing them with a trust susceptible of the grossest abuse, and by which, in course of time, they contrived to arrest the civilization, while they enslaved the minds and perverted the character of their countrymen. Their first conquest was the national religion, which originally was pure and holy, inculcating the worship of a Supreme and Universal Lord, and divinely foreshadowing, as we may be permitted to think, the blessed dispensation of the Messiah. Osiris, a son of the deities Seb and Netpe, supposed to be Saturn and Rhea, was represented as appearing on earth for the emancipation of mankind from the dominion of the Evil One, through whose machinations he was subsequently put to death, but after his burial, he returned to life, and became

the Judge of the dead. An equally suggestive myth is presented by the triads, into which the priests divided the creative attributes of the Almighty, and in which the third idea, arising as a sequence, was said to *proceed* from the other two. Such resemblances strike us as more than accidental; and as the whole career of the future Saviour was allowed to transpire in the prophecies of Isaiah, it is not difficult to believe, from the tenor of these ancient mysteries, that it may have been made known, together with the doctrine of the Trinity, at a much earlier period, though it was wisely excluded from the teaching of Moses lest the Israelites, from old association, should fall under the yoke of the Egyptian superstition. Hence their lawgiver's allusion to the Messiah, though distinct, was guarded and imperfect, tending more to raise expectation than to recall obscure and corrupt traditions.

Looking at the proficiency of the Egyptians in the arts and sciences within a few centuries of the Flood—a proficiency which

the skill and invention of modern times are in some things unable to equal, we can account for it in no other way than by supposing, what indeed seems rational enough, that it was a legacy from the old world, carefully handed down to posterity by Noah and his sons. In the book of Job, which also indicates a high state of civilization, the fact seems to be plainly stated, and the patriarch gratefully acknowledges his obligations to past races.

“The wisdom of the Egyptians,” at least in the first ages, till their religion became corrupted and perverted, was favourable to the emancipation and elevation of woman ; and hence the sex enjoyed more consideration in Egypt than among any other people of antiquity. The code of Hermes permitted but one wife, and though we learn from the Greek writers that female slaves were frequently introduced into families on the same footing as Hagar in the household of Abraham, there is reason to believe that this was not an ancient custom, but an innovation of a degenerate race. In the bright

morning of Egypt's renown, woman was treated with more respect, and held in more just estimation.

By the laws of Hermes, even the regal authority was intrusted to women, equally with men, when it was their right of succession; and the descendants of an Egyptian princess, though themselves born in a foreign country, could claim, and on several occasions actually succeeded to, the Egyptian throne. The queen-consort always shared the glory, if not the power of her husband, and was allowed a munificent revenue for her private expenses. This was derived from a tax on the fisheries and the vintage, the former of which alone amounted to nearly £100,000 a-year, and the whole of this enormous sum was appropriated by the queen to the purchase of jewels and articles of the toilet, without any deduction for the cost of an establishment. The illustrious lady also took part in the ceremony of the coronation; and a goddess was supposed to place on her head the royal insignia, consisting of a globe plumed with feathers,

drooping over the horns of Athor. A sceptre was placed in her hand, and she was probably anointed with oil in the same manner as the king.

The pages of Josephus, and the sacred narration of Moses, show us, in their account of Thermuthis, the daughter of Rameses the Great, what privileges and influence were enjoyed by the Egyptian princesses, and we have already seen that they transmitted their rights to their remote descendants. Great pains were bestowed on their education from their earliest years, and a sculpture in a tomb at Thebes, discovered by recent explorers, represents a learned scribe instructing a youthful princess, while his little pupil sits on his knee. Thermuthis appears to have been the only child of the king, and hence, as heir to the crown, may have possessed more than ordinary power, but, even under this aspect, the influence she exercised excites our surprise. The Egyptian sages had foretold the birth of a Hebrew child, whose future career would be highly injurious to their country; and this pre-

diction, like the more memorable incident at Jerusalem, had prompted a royal order for the destruction of all the male children of the Israelites. Yet such was the power of Pharaoh's daughter that she did not hesitate openly to violate this decree, and, at the instigation of Miriam, even sent for a Hebrew woman—the infant's mother—to take charge of the little foundling, declaring to all present that she adopted him as her son.

The princess is described as going down to the river to bathe, ablutions forming a very important, and, in fact, a religious custom with the ancient Egyptians. From the ease with which she is approached by Miriam, there is reason to suppose that the spot was not inclosed, and that no precautions were taken, by the posting of guards or other attendants, to prevent such intrusions. Thermuthis is accompanied only by "her maids," or ladies of honour, and when the fragile ark of Moses is descried among the bulrushes, "some that could swim," Josephus tells us, were ordered to bring it to the shore. The sacred narrative gives us,



in a few words, a beautiful glimpse of the princess's emotions on discovering the freight of the little vessel. "And behold the babe wept, *and she had compassion on him, and said, 'this is one of the Hebrews' children.'*" Her woman's heart, uninfluenced by the cruel dictates of policy, instantly yielded to the soft impulses of nature and her sex: Miriam's suggestion was eagerly adopted, and though the decree respecting the Hebrew children was necessarily known to all around, it is worthy of remark that no one presumed to question the decision, or the sovereign authority, of Pharaoh's daughter.

The lawgiver of Israel modestly describes himself as having been "a goodly child," but we are told by Josephus, who furnishes many additional particulars of his life, that his beauty was of a "divine" character, and St. Stephen speaks of him as "beautiful in the sight of God." While he was still in his infancy, Thermuthis presented him to Rameses, and made the potent monarch acquainted with his history.— "I have brought up a child who is of a divine form

and generous mind," she observed, as she placed the future prophet in the King's arms, "and as I have received him from the bounty of the river, in a wonderful manner, I thought proper to adopt him for my son, and the heir of thy kingdom." Thereupon, we are told, Rameses embraced the child, pressing him close to his bosom, as if, by this act, he sanctioned the design of his daughter. To gratify the princess, he even took off his diadem, and placed it on the head of the child, but Moses, in a sudden fit of passion, snatched it from his brow, threw it on the floor, and trampled it under foot. Jannes, or Jambres, one of the scribes who had foretold his nativity, was present at this scene, and immediately recognising the future enemy of his country, sprang on Moses to kill him. But Thermuthis interposed, and such was her ascendancy over the King—such her influence as a woman and as heir to the throne—that her adopted son escaped unpunished.

Remembering how jealously the native priests reserved to their own body the trea-

tures of their occult learning, the power of Thermuthis indeed appears unbounded, when we behold Moses, one of an enslaved race, instructed, through her favour, in “all the wisdom of the Egyptians,” and even admitted into the exclusive ranks of the military order. His beneficent protectress continued to shield him from the enmity and machinations of an implacable faction, till, in obedience to an oracle, he was appointed General of the Egyptians in the war with Ethiopia, when Tharbis, the Ethiopian princess, at the siege of Saba, was so dazzled by his beauty, that she sent to him to propose marriage, and on his promising to become her husband, delivered the besieged city into his hands. Probably Thermuthis died about this time, as the next thing reported of Moses is his flight.

That Thermuthis does not afford a solitary example of female ascendancy in the royal councils of Egypt, we have evidence in the pages of Herodotus, who commemorates the affection of King Mycerinus, the son of Cheops, for his daughter, on which

the priests founded one of their unnatural myths. Like Thermuthis, she was the only child of the monarch, and his reputation for wisdom and justice, which entitle him to be considered the Egyptian Solomon, may owe something to her influence. Unfortunately history has handed down no particulars of her life, but her virtues are manifested in the general sorrow at her death, and Mycerinus, with the approbation of his people, adopted a singular mode of evincing his grief, entombing the deceased princess in a wooden sarcophagus, encased with gold and shaped as a cow, one of the sacred symbols of their religion. "This cow," says Herodotus, "was not interred in the ground, but even in my time was exposed to view, being in the city of Sais, placed in the royal palace, in a richly furnished chamber, and they burn near it all kinds of aromatics every day, and a lamp is kept burning by it throughout the night."

Whether any ceremony was practised at the marriages of the Egyptians is doubtful, no representation of such an occur-

rence having been discovered ; but as their women, from the earliest times, recognised a ring finger, it is not unlikely that a wife was indicated by a wedding ring. According to Diodorus, the marriage contract secured the wife peculiar rights, amongst which was the control over her husband, who promised implicit obedience to her injunctions ; and there is, on the other hand, good authority for believing that it was customary for the wife, as a return for this deference, to give at all times the first consideration to her husband, even to the prejudice or the ruin of her children. Herodotus relates a curious incident in illustration of this practice. “ The priests,” observes the historian, “ said of this Egyptian Sesostris, that returning and bringing with him many men from the nations whose territories he had subdued, when he arrived at the Pelusian Daphnæ, his brother, to whom he had committed the government of Egypt, invited him to an entertainment, and his sons with him, and ordered wood to be brought round the house, and having caused it to be piled up,

set it on fire ; but Sesostris being informed of this, immediately consulted with his wife—for he took his wife with him, and she advised him to extend two of his six sons across the fire, and form a bridge over the burning mass, and that the rest should step on them and make their escape. Sesostris did so, and two of his sons were in this manner burnt to death ; but the rest, together with their father, were saved. Sesostris having returned to Egypt, then took revenge on his brother.”

The ties of consanguinity, as in the earlier world, were wholly disregarded in the marriages of the Egyptians, and a union between brother and sister was common. The community naturally broke itself into distinct classes, according to the rank or occupation of the individual, but families were not obliged to marry in their own class, and a nobleman might take a wife from the lower orders. There was but one grade debarred from this privilege, the race of swineherds ; and as it was deemed infamous to be connected with the followers of this

occupation, their daughters, from necessity as well as custom, married exclusively in their own tribe.

The women of Egypt early paid considerable attention to the toilet. Their dress, according to Herodotus, consisted usually of but one garment, though a second was often added. Among the upper orders, the favourite attire was a petticoat, tied round the waist with a gay sash, and worn under a robe of fine linen, or a sort of chintz, variously coloured, and made large and loose, with wide sleeves, the band being fastened in front just under the bust. Their feet were encased in sandals, the rudiment of the present Eastern slipper, which they resembled also in their embroidery and design. Their persons and apparel, in conformity with Oriental taste in all ages, were profusely decked with ornaments, "jewels of silver and jewels of gold," with precious gems of extraordinary size, of which imitations, hardly distinguishable from the real stones, were within the reach of the humblest classes, whose passion for finery

could not be surpassed by their superiors. The richly carved and embroidered sandals, tied over the instep with tassels of gold, were surmounted by gold anklets or bangles, which, as well as the bracelets encircling the wrist, sparkled with rare gems; and necklaces of gold, or of beautiful beads, with a pendant of amethysts or pearls, hung from the neck. Almost every finger was jewelled, and the ring finger, in particular, was usually allotted several rings, while massive earrings, shaped like hoops, or sometimes taking the form of a jewelled asp, or of a dragon, adorned the ears. Gloves were used at a very early date: and among the other imperishable relics of that olden time, the tombs of Egypt have rendered up to us a pair of striped linen mittens, which once covered the hands of a Theban lady.

Women of quality inclosed their hair with a band of gold, from which a flower drooped over the forehead, while the hair fell in long plaits to the bosom, and behind streamed down the back to the waist. The side hair was secured by combs, made of polished



wood, or by a gold pin, and perhaps was sometimes adorned, like the brow, with a favourite flower.

The toilet was furnished with a brazen mirror, polished to such a degree as to reflect every lineament of the face; and the belles of Egypt, as ladies of the present day may imagine, spent no small portion of their time with this faithful counsellor. Their boudoirs were not devoid of an air of luxury and refinement, particularly congenial to a modern imagination. A stand near the unglazed window supported vases of flowers, which filled the room with delicious odours; a soft carpet overspread the floor; two or three richly-carved chairs, and an embroidered fauteuil, afforded easy and inviting seats; and the lotus and papyrus were frescoed on the walls. Besides the brazen mirror, other accessories of the toilet were arranged on the ebony table, and boxes and caskets grotesquely carved, some containing jewels, others furnished with oils and ointments, took their place with quaintly cut smelling bottles, wooden combs, silver or

bronze bodkins, and lastly pins and needles.

Seated at this shrine, the Egyptian beauty, with her dark glance fixed on the brazen mirror, sought to heighten those charms which are always most potent in their native simplicity. A touch of collyrium gave illusive magnitude to her voluptuous eyes; another cosmetic stained their lids; a delicate brush pencilled her brows—sometimes, alas! imparted a deceitful bloom to her cheeks; and her taper fingers were coloured with the juice of hennah. Precious ointments were poured on her hair, and enveloped her in an atmosphere of perfume, while the jeweller's and milliner's arts combined to decorate her person.

In Sir Gardner Wilkinson's admirable work on Ancient Egypt, to which I am indebted for some valuable information, there is a plate representing a lady in a bath with her attendants, drawn from a sculpture in a tomb at Thebes, whence we may derive some faint idea of the elaborate character of an Egyptian toilet. The lady is seated

in a sort of pan, with her long hair streaming over her shoulders, and is supported by the arm of an attendant, who, with her other hand, holds a flower to her nose, while another damsel pours water over her head, and a third washes and rubs down her delicate arms. A fourth maiden receives her jewels, and deposits them on a stand, where she awaits the moment when they will be again required.

Women of the humbler classes, as already intimated, were as susceptible as their superiors to the attractions of dress, though they could not devote so much time to the seductive labours of the toilet. Over their stuff petticoat, they wore a capacious linen robe, which reached to their sandals, yet never hid from view a pretty ankle, or its glittering metal bangles, studded with glass emeralds. Slaves were obliged to adopt a simpler costume, except on occasions of rejoicing, when these poor children of misfortune, wreathing their faces with forced smiles, danced for the amusement of their masters' guests.

Women, whether wives or spinsters, were

not debarred from the pleasures of social intercourse, or placed under any of the restraints imposed by the Orientals of modern days. The wife accompanied her husband into society; and when he received company at home—a frequent occurrence, as the Egyptians were a very sociable people—occupied the same seat with himself, generally a double chair, while the youngest of their children gambolled at their feet. At a *conversazione*, the ladies usually sat together, but at the banquet, they seem, from some of the sculptures, to be alternated with the sterner sex, as at a dinner-table of the present day. Unlike the women of other ancient nations, they were allowed to drink wine, which, at a party, was presented to them on their arrival by a female slave, who, at the same time, expressed a wish that it might prove agreeable and refreshing, while another attendant, following immediately behind, politely offered a napkin to wipe the lips. The privilege of drinking is said to have been sometimes abused, and a satirical artist has

represented a lady suffering from an excess of this kind, to the utter confusion of her astonished maidens—but we may well believe, as the Egyptian sculptors were notoriously given to caricature, that this is a libel, or, at least, a solitary instance of female intemperance.

The Egyptians cherished a great admiration of flowers, to the cultivation of which, in the garden attached to the house, the women of the family paid especial attention, and when a festivity was celebrated, these furnished them with bouquets, which it was customary for the hostess and her maids to present to the guests as they arrived. While the banquet was preparing, or after it had been discussed, the company were entertained with music, dancing, and tumbling, in all which performances, as in the other arrangements, women took a prominent part. The dancers were generally young girls, selected for their grace or agility, and perhaps their beauty. A light gauzy robe, secured at the wrists and waist, enveloped their forms, which, as they moved through

the dance, were distinctly seen, giving an ethereal character to the spectacle. They sometimes accompanied their movements with music, from an instrument resembling a guitar, played by themselves as they danced, or by clashing cymbals, or, where they depended more on their own vivacity, they kept time by snapping their fingers. The dance was chiefly remarkable for its graceful postures and rapid movements, though expressive gestures, now sentimental, now ludicrous, added to its effect, and elicited the applause of the spectators. In the tumbling performances, women, rendered supple by a severe training, revolved over and over like a wheel, while others were extended on the floor, with their hands held up by men, who, bending down, swung them round and round with incredible velocity. Egypt also boasted its *cantatrices*, some of whom, as among ourselves, were of foreign extraction, and hence were no doubt more popular. As musicians, their women excelled, it would seem, on the instrument resembling the guitar, though they also

played the harp, lyre, tambourine, and cymbals. It does not appear that they performed on the flute and pipe, which were in early use among the Egyptians, though probably played only by men.

Women regularly participated in the public festivals; and Herodotus describes, with his usual quaint brevity, their share in the festival of Diana, at the city of Bubastis, which, however, does not apply to the day of Egypt's prime. "Now when they are being conveyed to the city Bubastis," says the historian, "they act as follows; for men and women embark together, and great numbers of both sexes in every barge: some of the women have castanets on which they play, and the men play on the flute during the whole voyage: the rest of the women and men sing, and clap their hands together at the same time. When in the course of the passage they come to any town they lay their barge near to land, and do as follows: some of the women do as I have described: others shout and scoff at the women of the place: some dance, and others

stand up . . . this they do at every town by the river side."

Like most of the old religions, the creed of Egypt, while reserving the hierarchical functions to men, admitted women to sacred offices, and the Pallacides were selected from the families of the highest nobles, and even of Kings. The sistra was only intrusted to the wives and daughters of the chief pontiff, or to ladies of royal extraction, and, indeed, was frequently carried by the queen herself. A place of retirement for women, in some degree resembling a Roman Catholic convent, but not entailing a vow of celibacy, was attached to the principal religious edifices, and formed a sort of school, at which women were instructed in the duties of the temple. When their education was completed, they officiated as priestesses and minstrels, took part in the sacred processions, and filled other and less important offices connected with the celebration of public worship.

The amusements of women were various, and give a favourable idea of the character



of the people, which, far from being of the gloomy cast usually supposed, was extremely gay and sprightly. Besides the resources of music, singing, and dancing, the two last of which were undoubtedly cultivated by ladies of the highest rank, they enjoyed, as we have seen, the greatest relaxations of social intercourse, indulged in calls and parties, partook of banquets, drove out in their chariots, joined in pleasure-excursions on the Nile, and shared in public festivities. At home, their favourite diversion was the game at ball, which, from the play and suppleness which it gave to the limbs, and the activity it required—for it embraced both running and leaping, promoted a freedom of carriage especially captivating in the female form. Dice, though a popular game with the Egyptians, were chiefly appropriated to men, but ladies often amused themselves at draughts, and a sculpture in a royal tomb represents a King playing at draughts with the dames of the court.

Embroidery, stringing of beads, needlework, and the flower-garden, afforded, as in

our own day, attractive occupations to ladies of rank, when they could spare time from the pleasures of society, or the enticing calls of the toilet. Their needles, some specimens of which have been discovered, were of bronze, and were evidently used with great dexterity. Women of the humbler classes occupied themselves with the spindle, but, according to Herodotus, were not subjected to the severer labour of the loom, which was undertaken entirely by men. A portion of the day, the same authority informs us, was devoted by the mistress of the house to marketing, and in the evening, it was customary for the women of the family to sit on the roof, and converse with their neighbours. The only professional calling assigned to women was that of the accoucheur, which the prejudice of ancient times pronounced their exclusive office.

In rural districts women were still employed in the unsuitable occupations of pastoral days—the tending of sheep and cattle, and the carrying of water; and to these were gradually added other duties of the

farm, such as weeding, sheafing, and glean-  
ing. During a period of many ages, how-  
ever, all heavy and laborious tasks were  
assigned by Egyptian usage to the more  
vigorous hands of man.

As woman presided over the birth, so she  
was appointed a special mourner at the  
death, and at the imposing funeral, of the  
ancient Egyptian. When a soul had de-  
parted, women, hired for the occasion,  
poured forth, in a mournful train, from the  
house, throwing dust on their heads, and  
vehemently lamenting the deceased, whose  
virtues they proclaimed in a sorrowful and  
passionate chant. This ceremony was re-  
peated daily during the ten weeks that the  
body remained in the hands of the embalm-  
ers, when the women of the family, having  
their hair bound up with fillets, and their  
busts exposed, followed it to the tomb, in  
company with the other relatives, beating  
their naked bosoms as they walked along,  
and singing a dirge suitable to the melan-  
choly occasion.

Sepulture did not always follow imme-

diately on embalming; and an instance is recorded, in a sepulchral inscription, of a woman remaining unburied for a whole year, intimating the unwillingness of her surviving relatives, perhaps of an attached husband, to part with her remains. Bodies were usually given to the embalmers as soon as life expired; but this was not invariably the case, and Herodotus mentions that those of women of rank, or who had been remarkable for their beauty, were retained for several days—a dangerous usage in the warm climate of Egypt.

It was natural that a people who treated the softer sex with so much consideration, should place a high value on virtue; and we find that the seventh commandment of the Hebrews was a statutory law with the Egyptians, who punished its violation with great severity. Yet as death was the penalty enforced by some contemporary nations, we can recognise even here the influence of a superior civilization, which, though cruel, refrained from the last rigour. The law of Egypt deprived the offender, not of her

life, but of her beauty ; and by condemning her to lose her nose, made her, at the same time, a perpetual witness to her own degradation.

But the wise institutions which obtained for woman the place of honour in Egypt, and, as a consequence, secured that favoured land all the blessings of her refining influence, were gradually corrupted : the craft of the priest converted religion into an extravagant superstition ; and the evil nature of man, no longer restrained by religious scruples, consummated the national ruin. The practice of polygamy, in the form already described, lowered the dignity, as well as vitiated the character of the sex, and woman oppressed became woman debased. It is impossible to turn over the pages of Herodotus, to read his account of the Bacchanalian procession, and the episode of King Rhampsinitus, without becoming painfully sensible of the low condition to which the women of Egypt were ultimately reduced. Their treatment, indeed, grew every day worse, keeping pace with the

decline and corruption of the nation, till, at last, we behold her enduring cruel punishments, which modern justice withholds from the vilest female criminals. At one time she is publicly beaten with a stick; at another, loaded with overwhelming burdens, buried in a dungeon, or sent to work at the mines—not, as might be supposed, for any guilt of her own, but in expiation of the crime of a brother, a husband, or a father. Diodorus has drawn a touching picture of their sufferings at the mines.—“No attention,” he observes, “is paid to their persons; they have not even a piece of rag to cover themselves; and so wretched is their condition, that every one who witnesses it deplores the excessive misery they endure. They are allowed no rest or intermission from toil: neither the weakness of age nor woman’s infirmities are considered; all are driven to their work with the lash, till, at length, overcome by the insupportable weight of their afflictions, they die in the midst of their tasks: so that they long for death as far preferable to life.”

The beauty and personal graces of Egyptian women, celebrated alike by historians and by poets, were pre-eminent in the East from the days of Hagar, and on two occasions, were an indirect cause of great national calamities. According to an old tradition, the charms of the Egyptian wife of Cyrus, by estranging him from Cassandane, the mother of his children, provoked the invasion of Cambyzes. A Persian lady of rank attached to the court, having complimented Cassandane on the loveliness of her offspring, the Queen, with some bitterness, replied, "Though I am the mother of such children, Cyrus holds me in disdain, and honours her whom he has obtained from Egypt;" on which Cambyzes, then only ten years of age, is reported to have said, "Therefore, mother, when I am a man, I will turn all Egypt upside down."

Another account attributes the invasion of the Persian conqueror to the influence of Nitatis, daughter of Apries, a deposed King of Egypt. Cambyzes, on ascending the throne of Persia, sent to Amasis, who

had recently usurped the Egyptian sceptre, to demand his daughter in marriage, a requisition with which the tyrant was unwilling to comply, as Cambyzes being already married, his daughter, entitled by her rank to share a crown, would enter the Persian's family on an inferior footing. But dreading the resentment of Cambyzes, he sent Nitatis—who, as the heir of Apries, ought to have succeeded to the throne—to the great King's court, representing her as his own child; and Cambyzes would have been cajoled by the artifice, if the princess herself, anxious to be revenged on the destroyer of her family, had not undeceived him. “When the monarch,” observes Herodotus, “saluted her, addressing her by her father's name, she said to him, ‘O, King! you do not perceive that you have been imposed upon by Amasis, who, having dressed me in rich attire, sent me to you, presenting me as his own daughter; whereas, in truth, I am the daughter of Apries, whom he, though he was his own master, put to death, after he had incited the Egyptians to revolt.’”



Such a treacherous action, involving so gross an affront, greatly irritated Cambyzes, and led to the sanguinary battle at the mouth of the Pelusian Nile, in which he completely vanquished Psammenitus, who had succeeded his father Amasis, and overthrew the ancient monarchy of Egypt.

A forcible illustration of the barbarity of those times is afforded by the cruel treatment inflicted on the daughter of Psammenitus, who, when the conqueror had captured Memphis, was dressed in the garb of a slave, and compelled, with other maidens of rank, to carry a pitcher of water through the principal streets of the city, while her father and his court, seated on a high platform, were condemned to witness her humiliation, and listen to the lamentations of her afflicted companions. The fallen King is said to have borne this calamity, as well as the execution of his son, with a mournful dignity, which surprised and touched his conqueror, but when a venerable courtier, who had long been his friend, and had lost everything he possessed in his service, was

led by in the rags of a beggar, he burst into tears, exclaiming to Cambyses, who demanded the reason of this sudden outburst, "Son of Cyrus, the calamities of my family are too great to be expressed by lamentation ; but the griefs of my friend are worthy of tears ; for he has fallen from abundance and prosperity into beggary and want"—a noble reply, which for a time induced the victor to spare the life of his captive, though it was afterwards forfeited to his jealousy and suspicion.

The beauty and blandishments of Cleopatra will remain a proverb to latest ages, and her mental acquirements attest, by their extent and variety, that the degraded condition to which woman had been reduced, in her moral and social relations, though it had destroyed her sense of virtue, had not impaired her natural capacity. Such was the learning of this princess, that, like our own Elizabeth, she could give audience to the ambassadors of seven different nations in their native tongues, and, in the midst of her vicious excesses, the love of literature

maintained such an ascendancy over her, that at a great cost, she enriched the library of Alexandria with the manuscript treasures of Pergamus. She made art the minister to her pleasures as well as the handmaid of taste ; and luxury exhausted its devices to pander to her caprice. A bark resplendent with gold bore her couch of down over the summer waves of the Nile ; precious odours perfumed the refreshing breeze, which swelled its silken sails, and the strokes of the rowers, as they glided through the stream, kept time to instruments of music. At her sumptuous banquets, she surpassed the prodigality of Lucullus, and in the goblets handed to her guests, melted pearls gave a doubtful flavour to the wine. Her irresistible charms, aided by the spell of her conversation, made a prey of Cæsar, who, after subjugating the world, suffered himself to be enslaved by a woman ; and Antony, maddened by her love, and ruined by her treachery, had his panting frame drawn up by a cord into a tower, that he might breathe his last at her feet. There, bidding a reluctant adieu to the

pomps and vanities which had been the bane of her life—with her favourite maidens already lying dead at her side—the last monarch of Egypt, pressing a venomous asp to her bosom, perished by her own hand—a notable example of the mutability of human fortune.

## IV.

## THE HEBREWS.

THE history of the Jews is inextricably associated with that of Egypt—in the adventures of their ancestors, in their first migration, their settlement in Goshen, their long bondage, and their deliverance, and, subsequently, in their wars, their alliances, and their disasters. It might be expected, therefore, that they should be sensibly impressed with many of the customs of the ascendant people, particularly in domestic life, and in the moral relations of woman ; but their usages, except in some trifling instances, were really wholly different, and, under the Mosaic code, the position of woman especially was peculiar and distinct.

But it was not only in reference to the law that the sex in Israel stood alone. The long-promised Deliverer of mankind was to be of the Jewish race, the offspring of a Jewish woman; and as every one, from the children of the chief men to the humblest handmaid, might hope to be the mother of the mighty child, such an expectation exercised a permanent influence on the beauty, as well as on the character, feelings, and aspirations of the daughters of Israel. It is not among the existing descendants of Abraham that we are to look for the Hebrew type of antiquity; for though it may still be detected in the Oriental Jew, the Israelites of the West retain, in their sinister features, no trace of their origin. Centuries of oppression, engendering an abject servility, and inveterate habits of sordid dealing, have completely changed their once handsome physiognomy; and we look in vain for the Arab brow, the blue eye, the dazzling complexion, which, as history affirms, characterized the Esthers and Judiths of old, and which still meet the eye of the traveller in

the deserted streets of Bethlehem. This beauty of the Jewish woman was, as already observed, heightened by her constant recollection of the destiny reserved for her—which was kept before her from her earliest years, introduced into the sacred canticles, and preached in the tabernacle, the synagogue, and the temple. The reflections thus inspired in her mind, became a source of moral elevation, fruitful of every virtue, because they created and insured self-respect.

The laws relating to women were severe, but were couched in a just, considerate, and protecting spirit. Enforcing a high standard of public virtue, and punishing with death the infringement of the marriage tie, they yet, as in Exodus xxi. 16, 17, showed compassion for human infirmity, while in Leviticus xix. 20, they threw a kindly mantle over the weakness of the bondwoman. The widow, left peculiarly defenceless in a pastoral community, was protected by the most stringent enactments, and God repeatedly proclaimed himself her guardian and avenger. “Thou shalt not afflict any

widow," was the emphatic language of the statute, Exodus xxii. 22. "If thou afflict them in any wise, and they cry at all unto me, I will surely hear their cry. And my wrath shall wax hot, and I will kill you with the sword, and your wives shall be widows, and your children fatherless." Nor is it accounted the least of the offences of the Israelites, whenever they fall away from the path of duty, that they persecuted and oppressed the widow, thus violating the law both of God and man.

The women of the tribe of Levi bore a part in the ministrations of religion, and the holy mantle of prophecy devolved on Miriam, Deborah, and other venerable matrons, the oracles and sybils of the early world. Maidens of priestly extraction, especially trained for the purpose, officiated in the religious services of the tabernacle and temple, as musicians, dancers, and choristers. In the 15th chapter of Exodus, after the passage of the Red Sea, we are told that "Miriam the prophetess, the sister of Aaron, took a timbrel in her hand, and all the women went



out after her with timbrels and with dances. And Miriam answered them, ‘Sing ye to the Lord, for he hath triumphed gloriously.’ ” Music and singing entered largely into the religious, as into the social and domestic, rejoicings of the Jews. For the first, the book of Psalms, embracing such a variety of themes, and the numerous canticles of Holy Writ, afforded the priestesses a wide range of subjects; and when a domestic festivity was celebrated, songs were composed expressly for the occasion. When David arranged the services of the Temple, the Levite women, including both the wives and daughters of priests, were formed into the seventh band of singers, and placed under the direction of Shemiramoth; and Ezra, on re-establishing public worship at Jerusalem, attached to the restored Temple a train of two hundred ‘singing women.’ ”

The manner in which the musicians entered the sanctuary, in the solemn processions, is described in the Psalms—“The singers go before, the minstrels follow after, in the midst are the damsels playing the

timbrels.” Of the instruments of music, the harp, if we may judge from the precedence assigned to it, was the most usual and the most popular ; but the Scriptures enumerate also the nabel, psaltery, lute, dulcimer, and timbrels. Women are only mentioned as playing the timbrels and harp ; and the daughters of Sion, during their captivity at Babylon, are represented as hanging their “ harps upon the willows.” Probably the lute also was played by women.

The wives and daughters of priests, occupying a position calculated to attach great weight to their example, were required to be particularly blameless in their morals and conduct, and the law visited their derelictions with inexorable severity. For the crime overlooked in ordinary cases, the daughter of a priest was to be burnt alive, a punishment assigned by the Mosaic code to no other offender. A priest could not wed a divorced woman ; and the high-priest, holding the office of greatest sanctity, was prohibited from contracting a union with a widow.

The Israelites were forbidden to intermarry with other nations, as it was foreseen by God, and even foretold, that if they formed such alliances, they would be seduced by their wives into the idolatrous usages prevalent in surrounding countries. Moses himself was reproached by Miriam (Numbers xii. 1) "because of the Ethiopian woman he had married," and who was no doubt the Princess Tharbis mentioned by Josephus; and Balaam, after finding his sacrifices and enchantments in the camp of Moab had no effect, counselled Balak to decoy the Israelites to their ruin through the Midianitish damsels: so early did man convert woman into an instrument of evil, though he remained insensible of her far greater influence, under proper tuition, for good.

The great hardship of the Mosaic statutes as they affected woman, was the facility afforded to divorce, which Divine authority, while ignoring the practice, declared to be intended as a punishment—"because of the hardness of your hearts;" and if all its effects are maturely considered, no one will

doubt that it worked out its own retribution, contributing not a little, as time rolled on, to the eventual degeneracy of the race. Such being the result naturally to be expected, it may be asked why Moses sanctioned so unjust, and so pernicious a statute; but if this were a suitable place to discuss the subject, reasons might be advanced why mankind should be taught, in the history of a chosen nation, that every blessing which Providence can bestow, whether of territory, government, or religion, will fail to preserve a people unmindful of the rights of nature, and who, in the outraged name of law, trample on the weakness of woman.

Marriages are contracted in the East at a very early age, and the Jewish maidens, like those of the neighbouring nations, were often betrothed in their twelfth year. Up to that time, they received the name of *Alma*, *virgin* or *shut up*, in reference to the strict seclusion in which they lived, and their tender years are denoted in the phrase "spouse of one's youth." At the betrothal, the amount of the dowry, a settlement made

on the bride by the bridegroom, was agreed upon, and the conditions of the union were often committed to writing. The bridegroom also presented the bride with a piece of silver, exclaiming "Receive this piece of silver as a pledge that you shall become my spouse." For a spinster, the marriage ceremonies, as in the time of the Patriarchs, extended over seven days, but in the case of a widow, they were limited to three. The wedding of Samson (Judges xiv.), and that of Tobias (Tobit vii.) with the Canticle of Solomon, and, lastly, the Parables of our Lord, illustrate most fully the form and character of the nuptial festivities. In the Canticle of Solomon, celebrating the monarch's espousals with the daughter of Pharaoh, the proceedings of each day are minutely related, and the varied emotions of the lovers described. It was not till the third morning, we learn from this epithalamium, that the impatient bridegroom was permitted to see the face of his mistress, and then she coquettishly drops her veil, as if unconsciously, to allow him a glimpse of her

features. This was the most eventful incident in the life of an Eastern woman, for, whatever her charms, she could not be certain, while they remained concealed, that she should secure the admiration or the love of her husband, and hence would either have before her the cruel prospect of divorce, or at the last moment, when her engagement and betrothal had become public, might be exposed to the insult of rejection. The royal poet has delicately touched on the misgivings of his bride, at this interesting moment, when, in her modest estimate of her attractions, she doubted the effect of her dark complexion. "Look not upon me," she exclaims: "because I am black, because the sun hath looked upon me my mother's children were angry with me: they made me keeper of the vineyards, but mine own vineyards have I not kept."

On the evening of the seventh day, the bride was escorted from the residence of her father to her future home by a grand procession, composed of the bridegroom and his friends, who, as they proceeded,

uttered exclamations of joy, proclaiming the approach of their favoured companion : and on nearing the dwelling, the train was met by the maiden friends of the bride, carrying lanterns and joining in the festal shout. They all entered the house together, when the door was closed : and each individual, throwing over his shoulder a kerchief or scarf—a *wedding garment*—followed the bridal pair to the banquet, which was presided over by the most intimate friend of the bridegroom, the governor of the feast. Riddles were then proposed, as at the nuptials of Samson ; and the bridegroom, as on that occasion, presented ornaments and trinkets to their successful expounders.

These customs, which prevailed from time immemorial among the Jews, were followed by most of the Oriental nations, and, indeed, are still practised in many parts of the East. Ward, in his “ View of the History of the Hindoos,” gives the following corresponding account of a Hindoo marriage.—“ The bridegroom came from a distance, and the bride lived at Serampore, to which place the

bridegroom was to come by water. After waiting two or three hours, at length near midnight it was announced as if in the very words of Scripture, ‘Behold, the bridegroom cometh: go ye out to meet him.’ All the persons employed now lighted their lamps, and ran with them in their hands to fill up their stations in the procession: some of them had lost their lights, and were unprepared, but it was then too late to seek them, and the cavalcade moved forward to the house of the bride . . . . The bridegroom was carried in the arms of a friend and placed in a superb seat in the midst of the company, where he sat a short time, and then went into the house, the door of which was immediately shut, and guarded by Sepoys. I and others expostulated with the doorkeepers, but in vain. Never was I so struck with our Lord’s beautiful parable as at this moment: the door was shut!”

On the death of her husband, the Jewish woman, if left childless, offered herself in marriage to his eldest brother, or to his next of kin; and if the successive relatives of the deceased declined the overture, she



retained her husband's estate. An instance of this custom, and the ceremonies attending it, is recorded in the 4th chapter of Ruth, and affords a curious glimpse of the moral perceptions of the day.

The bridal dress of a Princess, or Jewish lady of rank, whose parents possessed sufficient means, was of the most sumptuous description, as may be seen from the account given of that worn by the bride of Solomon, in the Canticles; and the various articles enumerated show the additions which feminine taste had already made to the toilet. The body was now clothed in a bodice, ascending to the net-work which inclosed, rather than concealed, the swelling bust; and jewelled clasps and earrings, with strings of pearls and chains of gold, gave a dazzling effect to Oriental beauty. In Solomon's reign, silk is said to have been added to the resources of the toilet; and the sex owe to a sister—Pamphyla, the daughter of Patous—the discovery of this exquisite material, in which woman wrested from nature a dress worthy of her charms.

The ordinary attire of Jewish women was made of linen, usually white, without any intermixture of colours, though, in accordance with the injunction in Numbers xv. 38, they made “fringes in the border of their garments,” and “put upon the fringe of the borders a riband of blue.” Judith, when she sought to captivate Holofernes, “put on her garments of gladness, wherewith she was clad during the life of Manasses her husband : and she took sandals upon her feet, and put about her her bracelets and her chains and her rings and her earrings, and all her ornaments, and decked herself bravely to allure the eyes of all men that should see her.” Gemmed bangles encircled her ankles, attracting the glance to her delicate white feet ; and Holofernes, by an Oriental figure of speech, is said to have been “ravished by the beauty of her sandals.” Like the belles of Egypt, she did not disdain, in setting off her charms, to have recourse to perfumes and cosmetics, and, previously to setting out, she “anointed herself with precious ointment.” In another place, Jezebel is

said to "paint her eyelids," and Solomon, in the Proverbs, in describing the deceitful woman, adjures his son not to be "taken with her eyelids," evidently alluding to the use of collyrium. The Jewish beauty owed no slight obligation to her luxuriant tresses, which were decorated with waving plumes and strings of pearls; and in allusion to this custom, followed among the tribes from time immemorial, St. Paul affirms that "a woman's ornament is her hair." Judith "braided the hair of her head, and put a tire upon it;" and the head-dress of Pharaoh's daughter, in the Canticles, is compared by Solomon to Carmel. No mention is made of Judith's mirror, but it was undoubtedly made of brass, like those described in Exodus xxxviii. 8, as "the looking-glasses of the women which assembled at the door of the congregation."

The garments of a widow, as of mourners generally, were made of sackcloth; and Judith wore also "a shirt of hair." The term of mourning depended on the feelings of the bereaved woman, or, perhaps, in

some measure, on her means, and the widow of Manasses mourned his death “three years and four months.” Nor was this grief a mere form; for “she fasted all the days of her widowhood, save the eves of the sabbaths, and the sabbaths, and the eves of the new moons, and the new moons, and the feasts and solemn days of the house of Israel.” As in Egypt, and indeed most Eastern countries, women attended the family of a deceased Jew as hired mourners, and after the funeral, his female relatives frequently resorted to the grave to shed their tears over his last resting-place. Thus Mary repaired to the sepulchre of Lazarus, while Martha, confining herself to the house, received the condolence of her friends; and, on a more memorable occasion, Mary Magdalen and other women attended at the grave of the Redeemer.

The employments of women varied with their station, and, among the higher classes, needlework and embroidery, bestowed profusely on their own apparel, were favourite occupations. The mother of Samuel made

him a coat, which she took with her every year to Jerusalem; and, in later times, Dorcas prepared clothes for the poor. Spinning was also considered a feminine employment; and Moses records (Exodus xxxv.) that "all the women who were wise-hearted did spin with their hands, and brought that which they had spun, both of blue, and of purple, and of scarlet, and of fine linen. And all the women whose heart stirred them up in wisdom spun goats' hair." The virtuous matron in the Proverbs, though mistress of a large household, and having servants "clothed in scarlet," is represented as seeking "wool and flax, and working willingly with her hands. . . . She riseth also while it is yet night, and giveth meat to her household, and a portion to her maidens. She considereth a field, and buyeth it: with the fruit of her hands she planteth a vineyard. . . . She layeth her hands to the spindle, and her hand holdeth the distaff. . . . She maketh herself coverings of tapestry: her clothing is silk and purple. . . . She maketh fine linen and

selles it, and delivereth girdles unto the merchant." That it was customary for women to sell the produce of their spindles we learn also from Tobit, who, during the period of his distress, was supported by the labours of his wife. "And my wife Anna," says the suffering prophet, "did take women's work to do. And when she sent them home to their owners, they paid her wages, and gave her also besides a kid." Another occupation of the Jewish housewife was grinding corn, which is referred to in the memorable prophecy of our Saviour—"two women shall be grinding at a mill: the one shall be taken, and the other left." And in rural districts, carrying water, as in the days of the Patriarchs, continued, and still continues, to be one of the principal duties of the female members of the Jewish household; and is brought forcibly before us in the case of the woman of Samaria.

Of the accomplishments of Hebrew women, dancing, next to music, was the most popular, and perhaps the most usual. The charming

art was cultivated by both sexes, and by ladies of rank as well as by the poor ; and the Princess Salome, the daughter of Herodias, who claimed the cruel guerdon of John the Baptist's head, was the Taglioni of her time. Dancing was associated by the Jews with the holy festivals, and introduced into the public rejoicings ; thus, in the passage in Exodus already quoted, describing the exultation of the Israelites at their escape from Pharaoh, it is said that Miriam and the other women danced to the music of timbrels ; the ill-fated daughter of Jephthah went to meet the returning hero " with timbrels and with dances ;" and, lastly, Judith, on the success of her project for destroying the Assyrians, was received with similar honours. " All the women of Israel," we are told, " made a dance among them for her, and she took branches in her hand, and gave also to the women that were with her. And they put a garland of olive upon her head, and upon her maid that was with her, and she went before all the people in the dance."

The part assigned to woman in the Jewish commonwealth was a most important one, extending from the sacred offices of religion to the most menial employments; and their character and intellect rendered them equal to any position. In the domestic virtues they were excelled by none; and Michal shielding David from the anger of her father, Abigail interceding with him for her morose husband, Hannah making a coat for her little son, and the two sisters mourning for Lazarus, with other Scriptural incidents, afford us touching examples of their tenderness and goodness. In times of public danger, their patriotism and love of country were equally conspicuous; and who can read the pathetic lamentation of the daughters of Zion, as they sat on the distant banks of the Euphrates, without emotion? Nor were they wanting in bolder qualities, and on no less than four occasions, women were the deliverers of Israel. The names of Jael, Deborah, Esther, and Judith, revered in their own day, claim the respect and veneration of all posterity.



Yet it was in this land that, by the evasion and the abuse of the laws, woman was held in rigorous, if not cruel subjection, and her very name made a term of reproach. Even in those cases where her heroic devotion saved the commonwealth, it was disdainfully said that Israel was “delivered by the hands of a woman,” as if this fact, instead of being a disgrace to the Hebrews themselves, added to the humiliation of the enemy. Marriage soon became a mere form, and, at length, was degraded into a bargain. What can we say to such a contract as that described in the third chapter of Hosea, which is stigmatized, in the most opprobrious terms, as a prevailing usage of the time? Yet this demoralization of woman was not only tolerated, but sanctioned, by the corrupt and misguided authorities, who, deaf alike to the remonstrances of Heaven and the voice of nature, could not be persuaded that they were, by this complicity, fostering the germ of national decay.

The marriage-tie could not only be severed at the will of the husband, but a parent was

at liberty, if the connexion became distasteful to him, to reclaim his married daughter, and even to give her to another consort. Several instances of this custom are on record; and the case of Michal, the daughter of Saul, whom the King took away from David, and gave to the more courtly Adriel, will suggest itself to the feeblest memory. The practice was a vestige of the ancient Canaanitish code, which was still recognised among that race, from whom it was borrowed, with other barbarous usages, by their conquerors. Thus the Timnite father-in-law of Samson disposed of his daughter to one of his own countrymen, after the Jewish hero, having celebrated the wedding festivities, had been received as her husband, though in this instance both father and daughter incurred a cruel retribution.

The history of Herod affords us a sad picture of the helpless condition of woman in the families of the Jewish Kings. Alexandra, daughter of Hyrcanus, and widow of Alexander, of the august house of Aristo-

bulus, herself a princess of extraordinary beauty and capacity, was the mother of two lovely children, a son and daughter, who, next to Hyrcanus, were the lawful heirs of the Hebrew crown. The sceptre of Israel, however, had been seized by Herod, whose usurpation was legalized by the unscrupulous cupidity of Marc Antony, the ruling authority in the East; and the venerable Hyrcanus and his grandchildren were left to the mercy of the usurper, who had waded to the throne through blood. But woman, with all her weakness, possesses a mightier power than armies, to which the proudest conquerors must succumb; and the infamous Herod, who stopped at no crime, and no obstacle, was subdued by the soft eyes and dazzling brow of Alexandra's daughter, the peerless Mariamne. The enslaver of her country became a suitor at the feet of this defenceless maiden, and—for, in a woman's eye, valour covers a multitude of defects—won her favour, her hand, and her love.

The marriage was solemnized at Samaria, whence the royal pair proceeded to Jeru-

salem ; and here, at the earnest request of Mariamne, and as a gratification to the Jews, the monarch conferred the sacred dignity of High-Priest on the youthful brother of his bride, the Prince Aristobulus, who, on account of his descent from their fallen Kings and his rare personal attractions, was regarded with secret hope and pride by the Hebrew nation.

It was at the feast of the tabernacles that the young pontiff first officiated in the temple, in the presence of the King and court, and of worshippers from every part of Israel. The scene and the occasion were equally adapted to awaken the national instincts of the Jews, and to deepen their sympathy for the last representative of their ancient monarchs. Between the cherubim of the altar were spread, in costly array, those hallowed vessels of gold and silver which had caused such a terrible interruption at Belshazzar's feast ; and flowers of every hue were hung in festoons round the gilded columns, or strewn over the tessellated pavement, mingling their perfumes with the

sanctified odours of the censer. Through arch and aisle came the swelling chorus of five hundred voices, in which the soft, full tones of woman were predominant, while harp, lute, and timbrels added their notes to the thrilling concert. The ceiling of azure and gold, reflecting the dazzling sunlight, looked like a canopy of glory overhead, while Herod and his men of war, in their panoply of steel, the fair daughters of Israel, with their charms scarcely shaded by the dim veil, yet all yielding in beauty to the queenly Mariamne, the gorgeously-clad courtiers, the venerable sages of the Sanhedrim, the throng of priests and holy women, in vestments of spotless white, and the motley crowd of worshippers, combined to produce an imposing effect below. Aristobulus, arrayed in the magnificent costume of his office, stood in front of the altar ; and wearing on his breast the oracle consecrated by Moses, and on his head the mitre of Aaron, his tall form and seraphic countenance enraptured the people, who gave utterance to their feelings in a manner that

could not but displease, as well as alarm the usurper. From that moment the Prince's doom was sealed, though Herod, shrinking from open violence, resolved to make it appear the result of accident. Towards the close of a sultry day, Aristobulus was decoyed to the banks of the Jordan, whose cool waters, overshadowed by the graceful sycamore, offered the tempting luxury of a bath ; and his murderous attendants sprang into the stream, urging the Prince to follow. Too readily he yielded to their solicitations ; and plunging beneath the waves, was forcibly kept down by the others, and brought to the shore a corpse.

All Herod's subtlety could not blind Alexandra to the real character of this cruel murder. When the lifeless body of her son was borne into the palace, she threw herself on his bier, imprinted passionate kisses on his still beautiful face, and gave utterance to her sorrow in vehement ejaculations. With dishevelled hair and wild outcries, she rushed into the presence of the tyrant, and demanded the apprehension and punishment

of his ruthless myrmidons. The scowl on Herod's brow, more than the honeyed words from his lips, subdued and pacified her; and, after the first ebullition of grief, fears for her personal safety induced her to remain silent till she could obtain some opportunity of revenge. But it is seldom given to the feeble to overcome and punish the strong, and Alexandra's nature was wanting in that decision, which alone could insure her success. Dissimulation, if pardonable in particular exigencies, is not the quality of a great mind, and rarely accompanies great actions; but it was the ruling sentiment of this unfortunate princess, and characterized all her proceedings.

Cypros and Salome, the mother and sister of Herod, had from the first regarded the family of his wife with distrust and aversion, and subsequent events tended to embitter these feelings. With the proud confidence of beauty and genius, Mariamne treated their enmity with disdain, and, herself descended from the ancient Asmonæan race, scoffed at their ignoble and vulgar origin.

But the vacillation and imprudence of Alexandra, though she never ventured on such affronts, exposed her to the malice of these vindictive women, and more than once, their vigilance detected her in a clandestine correspondence with Cleopatra, at that time the enemy of Herod, and the mistress of the all-powerful Antony. It was the influence of Mariamne that preserved her mother from the consequence of these discoveries, but, although she escaped unpunished, the effect, when combined with other circumstances, was to diminish the ascendancy of the Queen, and to strengthen the hands of her enemies. Herod's ear was now opened to the whispers of suspicion, and the more malignant suggestions of slander ; and he began to look on his wife, whom he had hitherto considered spotless, with the dis-tempered eye of jealousy. In his mad love he could not endure the thought that she should even survive him, lest her hand should be given to another ; and being summoned to Egypt by Antony, he directed his brother Joseph to put her to death, if, as



there was some reason to fear, the Roman despot should adjudge his own head to the block. Herod's triumphant return prevented the execution of the sanguinary order; but, in the meantime, Joseph had revealed it to Mariamne, and this indiscretion cost him his life.

Though an estrangement between the royal pair resulted from this incident—an estrangement which Cypros and Salome exhausted their arts to confirm, and which the abortive intrigues of Alexandra contributed to prolong—so irresistible was the spell of Mariamne's beauty, that the King, after a faint struggle, again submitted to her ascendancy, but the same burning jealousy remained in his breast, blighting the happiness of the present and reviving his apprehensions of the future; and these, aggravated by the evil suggestions of his mother and sister, worked him up to an ungovernable pitch, when, quitting Judæa a second time, he proceeded to offer his homage to the victorious Augustus, after the memorable battle of Actium. Haunted

by his former misgivings, he once more secretly gave orders that Mariamne should be put to death if a similar fate befell himself; and once more his orders were divulged.

Herod returned, as before, successful; and his first act was to fly to the presence of the Queen, and dazzle her with his triumph. The friend of Augustus, confirmed in the regal inheritance of David, a warrior and a hero, he came, flushed with pride, to command rather than to sue, little expecting a repulse from woman's lips. But Mariamne, armed in the power of her beauty, felt no dread of his resentment: sensible of his inherent turpitude, she scorned his gems and purple. The eyes which had once looked upon him in love, kindling his black soul with their melting glances, now met him with undisguised aversion, while, in answer to his protestations of affection, she unmasked and denounced his perfidy. The King, already the prey of suspicions, was maddened by this discovery, believing it could only have been made by a favoured lover, and tearing

his hair and smiting his breast, he threatened to execute both the Queen and her informant. His menaces had no effect on Mariamne, who, disdaining to control her arger, replied in a tone of defiance, bidding him, as he had already killed her father and her brother, to add this fresh murder to the catalogue of his crimes ; and finally drove him from her presence by her taunts and reproaches.

Such was the critical moment chosen by Salome for accusing the Queen, by the mouth of her tire-woman, of an attempt to poison her incensed husband, who, blinded alike by jealousy and passion, eagerly credited the charge. A council was summoned ; the formality of an examination gone through ; and the innocent Mariamne, without being permitted to answer her accuser, was condemned to the block.

On her way to the scaffold a new indignity awaited the Queen. The miserable Alexandra, fearing that the next victim of Herod's cruelty might be herself, and hoping to avert his wrath, appeared at a window of the palace,

and regardless of the dignity of her station, and the tender claims of nature, publicly upbraided her daughter for her ingratitude to so indulgent a husband, the generous protector of her family, the spouse of her youth, and the father of her children. Even the obdurate hearts of the soldiers were moved to indignation by this unnatural act, but their murmurs were silenced by Mariamne, who, while she bore her own wrongs with majestic dignity, wept over the sorrows and unhappy fate of her mother, protesting her own innocence with her last breath.

This is but a solitary example of the injustice inflicted on women even of the highest rank, on the soil of Palestine ; but were we to descend into the humbler grades, a picture might be drawn of her sufferings, her degradation, and her bondage, at which humanity would shudder. From the same spot, however, a new dispensation was now preached ; the sentence pronounced on Eve was rescinded ; and the long slavery of the sex was finally terminated by the advent of the Redeemer.

## V.

## ASSYRIA—NINEVEH AND BABYLON.

To whatever age we may assign the foundation of the monarchy of Egypt, that of Assyria, its contemporary and rival in power, was at least as ancient, if not of anterior date. It is almost universally attributed to Nimrod, that mighty hunter before the Lord, whose name became a proverb in the mouths of men, and who was the first rudiment of hero worship. Under the primitive appellation of Bar-chus (son of Cush), easily corrupted into Bacchus, he was included among the deities of the heathen mythology: history preserves his identity in the more striking designation of Ninus:

and the ingenuity of modern times, which stops at no difficulty, has recognised him in the Asshur of Genesis. Tradition, in such cases a credible witness, points him out with equal precision as the builder of Nineveh and Babylon.

Of Nineveh, the people we are accustomed to call the ancients, and who are the founders of history, knew nothing. Homer makes a brief allusion to Assyria, when he includes Memnon, then an Assyrian captain, among the auxiliaries of Troy, but Nineveh had absolutely perished before Greece emerged from barbarism. It is to the sacred pages of the Bible that we must turn for information respecting the first of cities; and so completely were the denunciations pronounced against it by the Jewish prophets fulfilled, that it might almost have been supposed, from the silence of all other annals, that such a place had never existed. Destiny reserved it for the present age, and for the genius of an Englishman, to disinter the mighty ruin, and thus to confirm by its fragments the unerring verity of Holy Writ.

As men began to multiply on the earth, Nimrod, fourth in descent from Noah, whose life of nine centuries had not yet terminated, acquired his great pre-eminence and renown, signalising his courage by seeking wild beasts in pathless solitudes, never before entered by man. His intrepidity, his possessions, and his illustrious extraction, with a natural disposition for command, soon marked him out as a protector to the feeble, a leader to the adventurous, and a chief to the servile and ignorant; or, relying on his own might, he most likely seized the authority few were inclined to dispute. To this step, indeed, he may have been, and probably was, instigated by a woman—for we may believe that the wife of Nimrod was SEMIRAMIS.

The father of monarchs established the seat of his power at Nineveh,—described by Jonah, who visited it under the Kings of the second dynasty, as “an exceeding great city of three days’ journey,” which, estimated by the Jewish standard, has been set down as including a circumference of sixty

miles. It was surrounded by walls of a hundred feet in height, and of proportionate breadth, so that, according to Diodorus, three chariots could be driven abreast on the ramparts. Below, round the whole front of this inclosure, yawned a deep ditch, which had furnished the materials of the builders—sun-burnt bricks, composed of the excavated clay; and at every angle rose battlemented towers, in which alert sentinels kept watch and ward. The population, in the zenith of Assyrian greatness, has been estimated at 600,000, on the supposition that the declaration of the Almighty to Jonah, that the city contained six score thousand persons who knew not their right hand from their left, referred to children; but it appears more reasonable to conclude, from the context, that it was used to denote the number of ignorant adults, whose benighted condition, rendering them incapable of distinguishing good from evil, claimed forbearance from the God of mercy. Viewed in this sense—regarding the six score thousand as applied to the scum of the people—the



population must be reckoned as at least a million, which accords more with the extent of the city, and the power and greatness of its Kings.

Babylon was a twin sister of this venerable capital. Its circumference, measured by Herodotus, was the same, covering an area of sixty miles. The walls, three in number, one within the other, were of corresponding dimensions, and appear to have been surrounded by a brazen parapet, while gates of brass, flanked by huge towers, defended all the entrances. Like Nineveh, it was erected on a plain; and as the elder city crowned the banks of the Tigris, so the rushing waters of the Euphrates flowed through the other. The river indeed, besides supplying the aqueducts and conduits of the city, poured a copious stream into innumerable artificial channels, which, by aiding the bountiful hand of nature, ministered to the requirements and the luxury of the inhabitants. The far-famed "waters of Babylon" meandered through the garden of willows, where the disconsolate daughters of

Zion hung their harps on the trees, and irrigated the fields and parks, inclosed, with more than one royal chase, by the embattled walls. On the banks of these tranquil streams, the nobles and wealthy merchants took refuge from the heats of summer; and the numerous islets in the mid-channel were dotted with pavilions, where the Izaak Waltons of primeval days pursued their pensive sport. One of these retreats has been recovered by Mr. Layard, who, in his first account of Assyria, has preserved a drawing of it; and it is remarkable that this minor relic shows, by the presence of columns, a greater advance in architecture than the ruins of the royal palace.

The houses of Nineveh and Babylon were built of sun-burnt brick, but the interiors, after being coated over with plaster, were decorated with paintings, or panelled with alabaster, and the palaces and temples, which afforded more room for the display of art, were adorned with elaborate sculptures, representing historical, allegorical, and reli-

gious subjects. As no trace of windows has been discovered, Mr. Layard conjectures that, in regal edifices, light was admitted at the roof, but that veritable windows were constructed in ordinary dwellings; and, in fact, this is attested by the statement in Daniel—"Now when Daniel knew the writing was signed, he went into his house, and his *window being open* in his chamber toward Jerusalem, he kneeled upon his knees three times a day and prayed." Through this window, when the shutters were unclosed, he was seen by his enemies, which proves that it could not have been a skylight, and the probability is that it was but a few feet from the ground. The Assyrians were acquainted with glass, but seem to have had but a dim perception of its uses, as its beautiful quality of transmitting light, which renders it so important a material in modern dwellings, appears to have been unknown to them.

The prophet Ezekiel, who was in captivity on the banks of the Chebar, in the upper part of Mesopotamia, describes the decora-

tions of an Assyrian palace with great minuteness and fidelity. They included—and Layard's marvellous discoveries rise from their grave of three thousand years to establish the fact—"men pourtrayed on the wall, the images of the Chaldeans pourtrayed with vermilion: Girded with girdles upon their loins, exceeding in dyed attire upon their heads, all of them princes to look to, after the manner of the Babylonians of Chaldea, the land of their nativity." A carpet covered the floor; chairs, cushioned with down, but not yet furnished with the luxurious support of a back, were ranged around; and a basket of flowers in the spacious doorway filled the room with an agreeable and welcome odour.

Such, even in remote times, was the opulence of those cities which owed their earliest development to Semiramis. But that mighty Queen, as the first sovereign of her sex, is entitled to a more particular notice of her works, and of her great exploits, in these pages.

The origin of Semiramis is enveloped in

one of those fables which throw a doubt over the annals of antiquity, and, while they claim for their hero a descent from the gods, most probably veil an obscure, if not a dishonourable parentage. In her infancy she is said to have been nurtured by doves, till, by a fortunate accident, she was discovered by Sisona, the shepherd of the King of Assyria, and by him brought up as his own child. This weak invention can hardly disguise from posterity that Sisona was actually her father, though she thought it more becoming her subsequent regal fortunes, to account for their connexion in another way.

Semiramis had perhaps reached her thirteenth year, a marriageable age in the East, when Menon, a great officer of the court, was sent from Nineveh to inspect the King's flocks, and, for this purpose, presented himself at the house of Sisona. The young damsel took care to throw herself in his way, and if he was instantly smitten by her beauty, he was dazzled, on addressing her, by the witchery of her demeanour,

which, as all writers agree, invested her with more than human attractions. Her manners, indeed, were even more fascinating than her personal loveliness, surrounding her with an atmosphere of grace, particularly captivating to an Eastern imagination. After her elevation to a throne, it was sufficient for her to show herself at a window of the palace, to still the raging waves of popular tumult; and Valerius Maximus relates that on one occasion, being summoned from her toilet to quell an insurrection, she rode half dressed through the streets of Babylon, and presenting herself to the people, every one eagerly returned to his allegiance, and the revolt was quelled. To commemorate this incident, the Babylonians erected a brazen statue of Semiramis, representing her in the act of confronting the populace, with her hair streaming loose over her shoulders, and her bust exposed, as she actually appeared at the time.

Menon, the courtier, after inspecting the vast flocks of the King, still lingered in the

hut of Sisona, enchained by the syren accents of his daughter, but at length, discovering that he could never endure a separation, he persuaded Semiramis to become his wife, and accompany him back to Nineveh. There he immured her in his palace, more as a captive than a bride, fearing that her beauty might make too deep an impression on the susceptible heart of the King, but her vigorous intellect, aided by the influence of her charms, soon acquired such an ascendancy over him, that all restraint on her actions was removed. The magnificence of her lordly abode, indeed, could as little content her ambition as the mud hovel of her father, and she waited impatiently for an occasion of signaling herself in the eyes of the world, by some great, heroic, and unparalleled achievement. When the Assyrians invaded Media, she insisted on accompanying Menon in the train of the King ; but, to lull his misgivings, remained perfectly secluded till the army, after an uninterrupted series of successes, was arrested by the massive walls of Bactria,

which were defended with such obstinacy, that the whole expedition was threatened with ruin. Then this daring woman presented herself before the council, at which her amazed husband was conferring with the King, and suggested, as the walls of the town were impregnable, that an assault should be made on the citadel. She indicated the best mode of carrying out the design ; and while she admitted that it involved great hazard, claimed the honour of leading the troops to the attack—a post which the King, though unwilling to expose her to so much peril, could not but concede to so lovely a warrior, and for which, indeed, few of the bewildered council were inclined to contend.

The whole army mustered to see the beautiful wife of Menon place herself at the head of this forlorn hope, every man of which, we may well believe, was fired by the example of such a leader, advancing amidst the clash of timbrels and the waving of banners, towards the trenches of the enemy. For a few moments the issue was doubtful. A



cloud of arrows, and a dense shower of missiles, hurled from the lofty battlements, broke the ranks of the assailants, and perhaps damped their ardour, but Semiramis, undismayed by danger, still pushed on, and none could refuse to follow where a woman led. The scaling-ladders were raised against the walls ; the intrepid Amazon was the first to gain their summit, and, while the hosts of Assyria still looked wondering on, the golden standard of Ninus was planted on the roof of the citadel.

Accustomed to gratify every wish and every passion, and possessing absolute and irresponsible power, the Assyrian monarch could ill brook that such a woman should remain the wife of a subject ; and, as soon as he entered the captured city, he demanded from Menon the surrender of Semiramis. The sacrifice was more than the unhappy husband could be prevailed upon to make, and he ventured to oppose the royal will. At the Assyrian court, opposition was treason ; and vengeance, unrestrained by law, quickly overtook the

disobedient. The next day Menon was cast into a dungeon, and, to reconcile him to the loss of his wife, Ninus deprived him of his eyes, on which the wretched man gave himself up to despair, and put an end to his existence.

Semiramis now shared the imperial throne of Assyria, to which, fortunate in every relation of life, she soon brought an heir, the father of a line of kings. But this aspiring woman looked with contempt on the half of a diadem, though the partner of her power was content to be her slave. In a moment of confidence, Ninus was persuaded to decree that for five days she should possess supreme authority, and having assigned the offices of trust to men devoted to her interests, her first act, on assuming the regal functions, was to strike off the head of her besotted husband, when she became the sole occupant of the throne, and no longer placed a bound to her ambition.

Never since has woman been placed in a situation so eminently adapted for regene-

rating and permanently influencing the morals of mankind, as well as asserting the natural rights of her sex. It would almost appear that, while the curse of Eden was in full operation, Heaven had mercifully intrusted to herself the task of effecting her own redemption, and of throwing off the iron yoke which had been cast upon her. The time—for the new world was yet in its infancy—the means, and the instrument, a woman of matchless beauty, genius, and resolution, a queen, and a heroine, seem to be all especially suited for this great purpose. But Divine Intelligence had foreseen, from the beginning of time, that human depravity was incapable of elevating itself from its depths, let circumstances be ever so propitious; and none but a celestial Reformer could restore the equality of the sexes. The evil passions of man had so long been in the ascendant, that they had infected and corrupted woman, and nature was poisoned at its source. It is impossible to look back at the cruelties, the barbarities, and the revolting crimes perpetrated in those days—at the

utter subversion of right by might, the spoliation and oppression of the weak by the strong, and the perverted sentiments which animated the mass of mankind, without a mingled feeling of wonder and indignation. Nor would it be difficult to prove that this universal barbarism was the result and natural consequence of the long subjugation of the weaker sex, the gentle influence of which is a necessary element of civilization, and cannot be ignored without ruin to man.

Semiramis, endowed with every faculty for achieving greatness, which she regarded as the first object of life, expended her efforts in undertakings flattering only to her own vanity. Taking her tone from the complexion of the times, she pursued the shadow of a false glory, instead of seeking, by her example and laws, to reform and elevate her sex and species. The injustice and wicked licence of man were thus visited with signal retribution ; and a woman, who should naturally have been a dispenser of peace, rose up as a tyrant and oppressor.

Still posterity is dazzled by the achievements and genius of this great queen. In the midst of a guilty and foul life, she carried out her purposes with unremitted determination and unwearied diligence. The hanging gardens of Babylon, long one of the wonders of the world, were a splendid monument of her taste, if they were also a memorial of her extravagance. A wall, twenty-two feet in thickness, inclosed this magnificent pleasure-ground, which rose in successive terraces, supported by arches of gigantic height, to the level of the walls of the city, each terrace having a sufficient depth of mould to afford root to the largest trees, while plants and flowers, all of the rarest kind, grew in rich profusion, displaying the varied hues of Eastern vegetation. The uppermost terrace contained a reservoir of water, which, by means of an ingenious mechanical contrivance, drew its supplies from the Euphrates, and hence refreshing streams were conveyed, through meandering channels, to every part of the garden. Commanding spots were crowned with elegant

pavilions, embracing a view of different quarters of the vast city, and the boundless plain beyond.

In the midst of her capital, on the brink of the deep and rapid river, Semiramis erected two palaces, one of which extended for nearly eight miles along the bank, while the other, on the opposite shore, occupied three and three-quarters. The two buildings were connected above by a bridge, spanning the broad Euphrates; and below, a tunnel, the work of a patriarchal Brunel, afforded a covert passage through the bed of the river. Among the countless apartments of the larger edifice were three rooms of brass, which, like the mystic chamber of Bluebeard, were hermetically closed to ordinary eyes, and could only be opened by a spring, known to none but the Queen and her confidantes. The other apartments were furnished in the most sumptuous manner, and profusely decorated with sculptures and paintings, in some of which, to perpetuate the character of her recreations, the intrepid Queen was depicted with her husband at a

lion hunt, transfixing the king of the forest with a spear.

Another of the works of Semiramis was the temple of Belus, a structure so colossal, that it has been set down by Bochart as the veritable tower of Babel. If we may rely on the account of Strabo, eight towers, each six hundred feet high, rose consecutively, one over the other, from the centre of the building, which thus obtained the incredible altitude of a mile; and on the summit of this architectural Alps was an observatory, surmounted by three statues of gold, representing Jupiter, Juno, and Rhea. The figure of the fabled Thunderer, who stood erect, a marvel of primeval art, was forty feet high, and those of the goddesses were of corresponding dimensions, and equal beauty. In front of the images was a huge table of gold; and two goblets of the same metal, receiving the copious dews of heaven, offered an appropriate draught to the inanimate deities. Six thousand three hundred Babylonian talents were expended on the shrine

—a sum equivalent to considerably more than two millions of our money, and constituting a prodigious amount in those early times.

Semiramis adorned the centre of her capital with an obelisk, hewn in a mass from the mountains of Armenia, and conveyed by men and asses to the river, down which it was floated, on a vast and massive raft, supported by inflated skins, to its appointed site. This column of solid rock rose to the height of a hundred and thirty feet, tapering from a square of five feet in breadth, and could be seen at a great distance on the plain, over the lofty walls of the city.

But the genius of Semiramis could not find sufficient scope for its conceptions in the limited circuit of Babylon, and, far and near, she paraded her arms and her taste before the astonished world. Marching into Media, she encamped her vast host at the foot of a mountain, rising from the sandy plain of Bughistan; and here, in mere caprice, turned the arid desert into a beautiful garden, placing in the midst of it a colossal



statue of herself, surrounded by a hundred of her guards. From this Versailles she ascended to the inaccessible heights above, on the packs and burdens of her soldiers and of the animals attached to the army, delighted to appear where no foot had ever trod but her own.

On the summit of a rock, overlooking the Median city of Chaon, she constructed another garden, surpassing in beauty that of Bughistan ; and here she erected a palace, an eagle's eyrie, from every part of which she could observe the tented array of her troops below, as Balak and Balaam viewed that of Israel. While her victorious soldiers spread carnage and desolation before her, her track was marked, as she passed on, by the healing finger of art, apparent in every captured city. At Ecbatana she built another stately palace, and embellished the town with aqueducts and conduits, furnishing an inexhaustible supply of water ; and, to facilitate communication, she cut a road through a neighbouring mountain, over which she marched her whole army. Ad-

vancing into Persia, she added its rich provinces to her dominions, and then, reverting to her passion for the arts, studded them with cities and palaces, levelled mountains, and in other places raised artificial heights, as imperishable monuments of her power. Again in motion, she overcame Egypt, and entering the parched deserts of Libya, paused only where, at the sacred fountain of Hercules, the oracle of Jupiter Ammon met her with the words of fate. Then she learnt that, whatever dangers might threaten her, her reign would continue till Ninyas, her son, conspired against her life, when she would disappear from the sight of man, though she would receive divine honours after death.

Semiramis returned to Babylon a victor and a heroine, but her restless spirit, instead of being fatigued with conquest, thirsted for fresh glory, and she soon cast her eyes towards the golden soil of India. That land was then, as in after ages, regarded as an inexhaustible mine of wealth, abounding in gold and silver, and stored with every

precious gem ; and the population, though more warlike than their descendants, promised, as far as concerned their own prowess, an easy prey to a resolute adventurer. But India drew from her matted forests more formidable defenders than her enervated sons ; and the King relied less on his soldiers than on a countless host of elephants, trained to war, and ready at any moment to repel every invader. Semiramis, whose judgment equalled her courage, well understood the effect which these terrible antagonists produced on the troops of more northerly nations, and, to avert such a casualty, she devised an expedient worthy of an age when war was but an infant science. The hides of three hundred thousand oxen, slaughtered by her command, furnished a covering for wicker elephants, placed on the backs of camels, each of which, to give further colouring to the deception, was led by a keeper, in accordance with the Indian usage. A million of infantry, and five hundred thousand horse, if the testimony of antiquity may be credited, supported this other-

wise impotent armament ; and the expedition was accompanied by a corps of shipwrights, charged, as their exclusive duty, with the conveyance overland of portable boats, for the purpose of transporting the army across the Indus.

On the banks of this magnificent river, Shabrohates, King of India, had assembled a mighty and countless host to defend the frontier of his empire. Four thousand vessels of bamboo guarded the passage, and seven thousand of the dreaded elephants, each carrying a battalion on his back, formed an impenetrable phalanx along the shore. But nothing could withstand the onslaught of Semiramis, who, indifferent to danger, threw herself into the midst of the fight, and, by her presence and example, fired her soldiers with unconquerable ardour. A thousand of the Indian boats were sunk ; the vaunted line of elephants was broken ; and, placing herself at the head of her guards, Semiramis took possession of the gate of India.

But the rout of the Indians was not so

complete as the Assyrians supposed. Learning from a deserter the secret of the counterfeited elephants, which had greatly aggravated their panic, they faced about, driving their own huge beasts before them ; and the King, with an overwhelming force of infantry, himself encountered Semiramis, engaging the warrior Queen in single combat. For a time the conflict was equal, but, in an unguarded moment, Semiramis was severely wounded, and flying from the field, owed her life to the swiftness of her horse. With difficulty she reached the river, where a bridge of boats, which she had taken the precaution to construct, secured a passage across ; and gaining the opposite bank with a remnant of her forces, she ordered the bridge to be destroyed, thus arresting pursuit, though, at the same time, she cut off the retreat of the bravest of her soldiers.

The tide of the great Queen's fortune had now turned, and the moment had arrived when, perhaps at the suggestion of some wily priest, the prediction of the Libyan oracle was to be fulfilled. Justin accuses

her of entertaining too tender an attachment for her son, Ninyas, who was remarkable for his personal beauty, and alleges that this circumstance provoked the youthful prince to take her life ; but, whatever the cause, it is generally allowed that Ninyas, weary of her usurpation, did conspire with the chief eunuch to destroy his mother, though it is said that she discovered their design, and quietly resigned the crown, considering that her son was but the blind instrument of fate. But the ruling passion was strong in death : she was still the victim of a false ambition ; and, while abdicating the throne, asserted a right to divine honours. No longer ruling as a Queen, this arrogant and guilty woman claimed to be worshipped as a goddess.

The throne of Babylon was destined to be ascended by another woman, whose genius was scarcely inferior to that of Semiramis. Nitocris—such was this great Queen's name—was the most formidable opponent of the growing power of the Medes ; and, while renowned in arms, was not unmindful of the

arts. Her public structures had this advantage over those of Semiramis—that they were generally dedicated to some useful object. To strengthen the defences of her capital, she diverted the Euphrates from its bed, pouring its waters into a vast artificial basin, while workmen, engaged in the empty channel of the river, raised massive walls on either bank, inclosing the divided sections of the city, which, for the convenience of the inhabitants, she made to communicate by a drawbridge. The stream was then permitted to return to its bed; and embankments on either side, for a considerable distance beyond Babylon, prevented it from inundating the surrounding country, when the melted snows of Armenia raised the level of the water.

Nitocris emblazoned her sepulchre with a severe reproof of the avarice of mankind, which, in the sentiment conveyed, inspires a favourable impression of her understanding and character. The mausoleum of the departed Queen was erected over the principal gate of the city, at a considerable height

from the ground, and a slab in its face was inscribed in conspicuous characters with these words—"SHOULD ANY ONE OF MY SUCCESSORS, KINGS OF BABYLON, FIND HIMSELF IN WANT OF MONEY, LET HIM OPEN THIS SEPULCHRE, AND TAKE AS MUCH AS HE CHOOSES ; BUT IF HE BE NOT IN WANT, LET HIM NOT OPEN IT ; FOR THAT WERE NOT WELL." The tomb remained unopened till, after the capture of Babylon by the Medes, the crown fell to Darius, when it was sacrilegiously entered by that monarch, who, as a stranger and alien, was not restrained by those feelings of reverence cherished by the descendants of Nitocris. To his disgust, however, he found within nothing but the mouldering corpse of the Queen, surmounted by this inscription—"HADST THOU NOT BEEN INSATIABLY COVETOUS, AND GREEDY OF THE MOST SORDID GAIN, THOU WOULDST NOT HAVE SOUGHT GOLD IN THE CHAMBERS OF THE DEAD."

A third Queen of Babylon, Amytis, wife of Nebuchadnezzar, disputes with Semiramis the honour of having originated the



hanging gardens. She was the daughter of Astyages, King of Media, and the story affirms that on reaching Babylon, she so deeply regretted the beautiful mountainous scenery of her native land, that Nebuchadnezzar constructed these magnificent pleasure-grounds to dissipate her melancholy. Little else is known of this illustrious woman, except that she was endowed with extraordinary personal attractions, and possessed great influence with her eccentric consort.

The prophet Daniel leads us to conclude that the regal dignity was not bestowed on all the wives of the kings of Babylon ; and, in the account of Belshazzar's feast, only one of the monarch's spouses is distinguished by the title of Queen. This record also shows that it was customary for the Babylonian women to take part with their husbands in the public festivities, and its testimony is corroborated by other authorities. On such occasions, indeed, they were released from the restraints of ordinary life, encouraged to partake freely of the wine

cup, and to divert and exhilarate the company. It is a melancholy proof of the low social condition of the Assyrians that this object was often achieved at the expense of modesty, and held superior to such a consideration. Dancing, still the favourite spectacle of Eastern voluptuaries, was the most attractive feature at these entertainments; and ladies of the court, as well as hired dancing-girls, veiled, rather than attired, in thin transparent garments, tripped through their too light measures before the guests, to the sound of the harp and drum. Women of all ranks dressed as expensively as their means would permit, and flowing robes, said to have been first designed by Semiramis, probably on her elevation to the throne, were invariably the prevailing fashion. So early as the time of Joshua, the Assyrians were noted for their costly attire; and Achan, the son of Carmi, when questioned as to the spoil he had secreted, (Joshua vii. 19 to 21,) includes in his booty "a goodly Babylonish garment." Ladies, and the wives of opulent merchants,

who traded with Egypt and the rich dependency of Tyre, were profusely decked with jewels; and few deemed their elaborate toilet complete without a pair of lustrous earrings, bracelets studded with gems, and armlets and anklets of the purest gold. Black sandals, slightly bordered with red, contrasted well with their delicate white feet, over which they were secured, at the instep, by a fringed loop, clasped by a jewel. The eyebrows and hair were dyed black, and the long tresses, which often descended to the waist, were elaborately braided, and bound with a fillet. Mr. Layard conjectures that cosmetics were used to beautify the complexion; and relates a story from Nicolaus of Damascus, in which Parsondes, a young Assyrian noble, accuses Nanarus, viceroy of Babylon, of imitating the practices of women, by underlining his eyes with stibium, and painting his face with white lead. When Parsondes falls into the power of Nanarus, the latter, in revenge, determines to make his traducer so effeminate that he shall not be easily dis-

tinguished from a lady, and, with this view, he commands his myrmidons to “shave and rub with a pumice-stone the whole of his body except his head; bathe him twice a-day and anoint him; let him underline his eyes and plait his hair; let him learn to sing and play on the harp; and accompany it with his voice, that he may be amongst the female musicians.” The tyrant’s injunctions were fulfilled; and by constant restriction to the employments and little arts of the softer sex, Parsondes, from being the most manly character at the Assyrian court, became a miracle of effeminacy.

Marriage, instead of being a lottery, was a mere investment of money among the Assyrians. Herodotus relates that, once a-year the damsels of marriageable age were brought in a body to one place, and severally disposed of to the highest bidders, who, as a condition of purchase, were bound to make them their wives. The venerable historian describes the scene with more than his usual *naïveté*. The most beautiful, as might be expected, had precedence at the

rostrum ; and was put up for sale by a crier, when, says our authority, “ such men among the Babylonians as were rich, and desirous of marrying, used to bid against one another, and purchase the handsomest. But such of the lower classes as were anxious to wed, did not require a beautiful form, but were willing to take the plainest damsels with a sum of money. For when the crier had finished selling the handsomest of the maidens, he made the ugliest stand up, or one that was a cripple, and put her up to auction for the person who would marry her with the least money, until she was adjudged to the man who offered to take the smallest sum. The fund for this dowry was obtained from the sale of the handsomest maidens, who thus portioned out the ugly and the crippled.”

The happy purchasers of the beauties, as well as the mercenary bargainers for the plain (not always, perhaps, the least fortunate), were obliged to give security that the contract of marriage should be duly and legally performed, and the newly-acquired

wife publicly acknowledged. If the parties, however, on coming together, could not live in harmony, the transaction was annulled, and the disappointed purchaser received back his money. A maiden, however, had no voice in the disposal of her hand previous to this betrothal, nor could a man give his daughter to whom he pleased; but all must be brought to the auction, and hear their fate from the lips of the crier.

As might be inferred from such a regulation, female virtue, the source of every noble aspiration, was regarded with contempt by the Babylonians, and, indeed, was absolutely discountenanced by their laws. Women were held in the most cruel subjection, and, as if to rivet their chains, compelled to take part in their own debasement. This principle was even introduced into religious observances, and the practices enforced at the temple of Venus, which are described in the vivid pages of Herodotus, represent a depravity scarcely human. The national religion, like most of the Eastern creeds, was originally pure, and entirely

opposed to such orgies, being confined to the worship of a supreme and beneficent Creator, represented by the sun; but, as time rolled on, the Magians, or fire-worshippers, who became the guardians of the Assyrian faith, established innovations, which gradually paved the way for the worst forms of idolatry; and hence arose the general demoralization.

It is doubtful whether women were admitted to the functions of the priesthood by the Magians, though in later times, fire was typified as a goddess. One of their modes of worship is mentioned by Job, when he declares in his address to his friends, that he has never been enticed to kiss his hand to the sun, or to adore the serene brightness of the moon; and the prophet Ezekiel (Ezek. viii. 16) records that, on entering the inner court of the Temple, "behold, at the door of the Temple of the Lord, between the porch and the altar, were about five and twenty men with their backs toward the Temple of the Lord, and their faces toward the east, and they worshipped the

sun toward the east.” Fire was considered to represent the sun ; and Xenophon, in his account of a sacred procession of the Persian Sabians, describes Cyrus as following censers of fire, carried through the city for popular adoration.

Under such a religion, soon deteriorated by the corruption of hero-worship, and all the abuses of paganism, woman, as a weak and defenceless being, became a legitimate prey to the stronger sex, whose evil passions recognized no restraint, human or divine. Even her life was deemed of little value, and too often fell a sacrifice to unscrupulous violence.

The episode of Pyramus and Thisbe, which must not be set down as a fiction of the poet's, offers an illustration of the melancholy consequences which sometimes arose from their disregard of the natural affections. This ill-fated pair, who were both remarkable for their great personal beauty, had conceived for each other a romantic passion, which their parents refused to sanction, but a chink in the wall separating their dwellings



enabled them to interchange their vows, and these stolen meetings deepened and confirmed their attachment. At length, they concerted an elopement, engaging to meet at a well-known mulberry tree, near the tomb of Ninus, and beyond the walls of the city, whence, secure from pursuit, they could fly to another province, and pass their lives together. Thisbe arrived first at the spot, when she was terrified by the approach of a lion, and, winged by terror, took refuge in a neighbouring cave, inadvertently dropping her veil as she fled. Soon afterwards, Pyramus, who had experienced some difficulty in quitting the city, came in breathless haste to the tomb, discovered the veil, which had become dabbled with blood, and supposing Thisbe had been devoured by wild beasts, threw himself on his sword, and instantly expired. Thisbe now made her appearance, and discovering his bleeding corpse, snatched up the sword, and completed the tragedy by plunging it in her heart.

But whatever rigour the Babylonians exercised towards their own countrywomen,

it could not be compared with their inhumanity towards the women of conquered nations; and Holy Writ refers, in the terrible denunciations of Ezekiel, to their cruel treatment of female captives. The proud city of Tyre, when threatened with the army of Nebuchadnezzar, is told "her daughters which are in the field shall be slain by the sword;" and again, "he shall slay with the sword thy daughters in the field," as if such ferocity was so unnatural and so incredible, that it called for this emphatic repetition. Egypt is warned that the Assyrians shall cast her down, "even her, and the daughters of the famous nations, unto the nether parts of the earth, with them that go down into the pit;" and similar predictions are addressed to the Jews. In one of the sculptures discovered at Nineveh, women are represented on the battlements of a besieged town imploring quarter; in others, they are depicted, by the savage and exulting artist, as tearing their hair, and throwing dust on their heads, in all the agony of despair. It is conjectured that the figures of one of

these granite tableaux represent the women of Tyre. They wear the flowing robes of Assyria, of which their native city was a dependency—the fashions of the mother-country not being so easily renounced as its authority. Thus the sacred narrative is corroborated and illustrated by these tombs of history.

The revolt of the Babylonians from the Persians, during the usurpation of Otanes the impostor, was stained by a revolting massacre of Assyrian women, thousands of whom, without distinction of rank or age, were slain by their own nearest relatives, solely to save the provisions which they might otherwise have consumed. The Babylonians had been long preparing for an outbreak; and the confusion arising from the assassination of Otanes, whose history is given in our next chapter, seemed to offer a favourable moment for executing their design. Their chief difficulty was the scarcity of provisions; and, on raising the standard of rebellion, they determined, as the best mode of eking out their scanty

supplies, that all the women should be put to death, each man being permitted to preserve one wife and his mother. Without delay, the cruel resolution was put in force ; the tender claims of youth, the melting looks of beauty, the moving appeals of helpless and venerable age, all the ties of kindred and nature, were alike disregarded by the ruthless executioners ; and in a few hours, there was no house in Babylon in which there was not a woman dead.

The Persians, headed by Darius, who had succeeded to the vacant throne, soon encompassed the city ; but the Babylonians felt confident in the strength of their walls, their varied means of defence, and the unsuitableness of the surrounding plain for the support of the besiegers. Day after day they appeared on the ramparts, insolently taunting Darius and his soldiers, and treating their assaults on the massive fortifications with derision and contempt. On one occasion, a popular chief, amidst the applauding laughter of his companions, called out to the King and his courtiers—"Why sit ye there, O,

Persian? will ye not be off? for ye will not capture our city till a mule brings forth a foal!" He spoke in derision, but his words were afterwards set down as the language of prophecy.

In the camp of Darius was a Persian noble, named Zopyrus, one of the seven conspirators against Otanes, whose adventures are recorded hereafter; and this great officer was meditating in his tent how to advance the siege, when his groom brought him the surprising intelligence that his favourite mule had cast a foal. Zopyrus instantly recollected the taunt of the Babylonian chief, and supposing that the man, without being conscious of the fact, spoke under divine inspiration, he regarded the incident as betokening that he was to be the captor of the city. After long deliberation, he thought that this result could only be attained by stratagem; and hearing that the King would deem no reward too great for such a service, he resolved to effect it at any cost. In this mood he cut off his nose and ears, and shaved his face, a mark of the greatest ignominy

among the ancients; and then presented himself before Darius. The King, hardly recognising his counsellor and friend, and supposing that he had been treated thus barbarously by an enemy, burst into a passion of grief on his appearance, when, to his amazement, Zopyrus informed him that the mutilation he beheld had been inflicted by his own hand, and acquainted him with the design he had in view. It was therefore arranged, with the consent of the monarch, that Zopyrus should desert to the enemy, and lead them to believe these injuries had been inflicted by Darius, by which means he might obtain the command of the army, and then, in accordance with a concerted plan, deliver up the city to the Persians.

The stratagem succeeded admirably. Zopyrus, presenting himself at the gates, was admitted into the city, and conducted before the council of Babylonian chiefs, whom, after calling their attention to his mutilated and bleeding condition, and inveighing bitterly against Darius, he addressed as follows—"Now, therefore, I come to you,

O, Babylonians ! the greatest blessing ; and to Darius, his army, and the Persian nation, the greatest curse : for I know all their plans, and they, who have subjected me to this infamous treatment, shall find I can frustrate them." This harangue was received with acclamations by the council ; his appearance bore testimony to his sincerity, and on his claiming the command of a sortie, it was readily conceded to him. These favourable impressions were confirmed when he returned a victor, Darius, agreeably to their arrangement, having planted a division in such a situation that he could easily cut it in pieces : and three successive sallies being attended with the same result, his influence and authority, from the first very great, became paramount. The moment now approached when his secret object was to be accomplished. On an appointed day, the Persian monarch invested every side of the city, and the Babylonians as eagerly manned the walls, and impatiently awaited the attack. Arrows and missiles flew in mingled clouds from

the ramparts, and were returned from the trenches, or from moveable towers, raised to the level of the parapet, while huge battering rams were brought into operation below. But valour is no safeguard against treachery, and, at the very moment that the Babylonians were shouting with triumph, Zopyrus, clandestinely opening the gates, admitted the Persians into the city, and thus put an end to the struggle.

It would appear that the women whose lives had been spared on the outbreak of the revolt, were, like the others, barbarously massacred during the progress of the siege, with the same view of eking out the provisions; for Herodotus, at the close of the narrative from which these facts are gleaned, leads us to conclude that none survived. What was the number thus sacrificed it is impossible to conjecture: but as Darius, on restoring order, levied a contribution of fifty thousand women on the neighbouring provinces, expressly to supply wives for the adults, the extent to which the



butchery was carried cannot be questioned. Well might such an act bring down on the accursed spot the full measure of Divine vengeance, and no thrill of sympathy is awakened in the breast, when we read that Babylon, the Golden City, the Glory of Kingdoms, the Beauty of the Chaldees, the Tender and Delicate, a Lady, a Queen for ever—for by all these designations, and many similar ones, it is especially distinguished in the sacred pages of Holy Writ—Babylon the Great had fallen, fallen to rise no more !

## VI.

## PERSIA AND CENTRAL ASIA.

ALTHOUGH the empires of Egypt and Assyria, from being mentioned in the first annals of mankind, are usually regarded as the earliest kingdoms of the earth, it is doubtful whether they can claim priority over that of Persia, which for ages swayed the sceptre of the East. Sir William Jones considers the Persian monarchy to have been the oldest in the world; and has ascertained, from the half faded pages of the *Dubistan*, a record of great weight, that it existed under its original name of *Irán* before the foundation of Nineveh. Its antiquity is attested also by the structure of the

language, which Sir William found to be the mother of the Sanscrit, and, consequently of the Zend and Parsi, as well as the Greek, Latin and Gothic; and the character of the original population, which comprised three distinct races of men, inhabiting the vast expanse of India, Arabia and Tartary, affords further evidence of the fact. In the time of Esther (Esther i. 1), the Persian dominions, which are described as reaching from India even unto Ethiopia, comprised “an hundred and seven and twenty provinces;” and it is afterwards mentioned by Daniel, under Darius the Mede, the Cyaxares II. of profane history, as being divided into the same number of principalities, each governed by its own satrap. This was subsequent to the acquisition of Babylon, as related at the close of the preceding chapter.

It is impossible to ascertain precisely what was the first religion of the ancient Persians, but it was no doubt a form of the Sabian creed, which was very early established in the East. Mankind, having lost

the knowledge of the true God, naturally looked with veneration on the sun, the moon, and the planets, to which they ascribed the guardianship of the world; and the Magi soon added the worship of fire, as their symbol, emblem, and type. But this system, after enduring for ages, was modified and reformed by Zoroaster, an eminent and learned Magus, who, by inventing magic, was able to work miracles, and thus imposed himself on the Persians as a messenger from Heaven. He is by some confounded with Moses; and Plutarch, adopting the fabulous chronology of his contemporaries, represents him to have lived about five thousand years before the siege of Troy. But it appears that his real era was about six centuries before the birth of Christ—that he was, if not of Jewish extraction, at least born in Palestine, and was there servant to a Jewish prophet, who for an act of disobedience, smote him with an incurable leprosy. Hence he is supposed to be Gehazi, the servant of Elijah, and many circumstances concur in

support of this conjecture. Dismissed by his master from Judæa, he secluded himself for a time at Aderbayagan, where he conceived his religious system; and then, through the instrumentality of the Magi, obtained an introduction to Darius, at Persepolis, and easily converted him to his doctrines. These embraced the two great principles of good and evil—the first represented by Oromazes, or God, and typified by light; the other by Aramanus, or the Demon, typified by darkness; and between these powers, Mithras, or the sun, acted as mediator. God was to be worshipped with thanks and praise; the demon appeased and propitiated by sacrifice; and the majestic orb still exacted the adoration of the devout. Moral precepts, pilfered from the Hebrew Testament, a tiresome series of ablutions, and the practice of vows, were enjoined as solemn religious duties, but had little, if any, real influence on the character of the people.

The first Persian King of whom we have any credible account, is the elder Cyaxares,

the father of Astyages, who, under the name of Ahasuerus, appears in the Sacred Writings as the husband of Esther. Aryenis, a Lydian princess, of great talent and beauty, connected these monarchs with the ancient kingdom of Lydia, and became a bond of alliance between her native country and Persia. It is possible that she was the Vashti of Scripture, mentioned in the book of Esther ; but this is mere conjecture. Her marriage with Astyages, or Ahasuerus, at that time only heir to the crown, was brought about in a singular manner, illustrating both the barbarous practices and the superstition of those remote times. King Cyaxares maintained in his household some Scythian hunters, to whom, on a particular occasion, he confided several youths of distinction, with directions that they should be trained in the use of the bow and javelin, and the various exercises of the chase. Shortly afterwards, the Scythians fell under the displeasure of the monarch, in consequence of their having failed to procure the usual supply of game ; and being severely reproved for

their inattention, they resolved, in revenge, to kill one of the youths entrusted to their charge, and serve his corpse up in a pasty to the King, as the produce of their day's sport. Cyaxares partook without suspicion of the horrible dish, when its real character was discovered, and search being made for the Scythians, it was found they had fled to Lydia. Alyates, the monarch of that country, instead of driving such monsters from his dominions, afforded them a ready asylum, and refused to surrender them to the ambassadors of Cyaxares. A bloody war was the consequence, and the Persian sovereign, having gained some advantages, pushed forward, at the head of a mighty host, towards the capital of his adversary. The two armies met on the way, at a spot well suited for an engagement; but the battle had scarcely begun, when a thick darkness fell over the field, and the hostile troops became mingled in a promiscuous and undistinguishable mass. Regarding this interruption as a direct interposition of the gods, the two monarchs, in

the midst of the awful pause that ensued, mutually concluded a peace, and, to cement their amity, arranged a marriage between the Persian prince Astyages and the princess Aryenis, which was celebrated with great pomp a few days afterwards.

The history of Vashti, whether she were Aryenis or not, furnishes, in the simple, but precise and emphatic language of the Bible, some very material facts in reference to the position and social influence of the ancient queens of Persia. As at Babylon, so in Persia, but one of the wives of the King was distinguished by the regal title; and we are told (Esther i. 9), that while her consort entertained his lords, "Vashti the Queen made a feast for the women in the royal house which belonged to King Ahasuerus," implying, not only that she was the sole partner of the throne, but that the other wives of the King were subject to her authority, and partly contributed to her state. At the banquet of Belshazzar, in Babylon, the royal table was graced by the ladies of the court, but here they are



described as feasting by themselves, in a separate apartment of the palace, and the seclusion in which they are kept evinces how differently they were treated in the two kingdoms. It was not till the seventh day of the great feast in the garden, "when the heart of the king was merry with wine," that the seven chamberlains of his palace were commanded to "bring Vashti the Queen before the King with the crown royal on, to show the people and princes her beauty, for she was fair to look on." The royal lady heard of the wishes of her lord with unmingled astonishment. Such a proceeding was at variance both with etiquette and decorum, as they were practised at the Persian court; and, relying on the influence she possessed with Ahasuerus, "Vashti refused to come at the King's commandment by his chamberlains: therefore was the King very wroth, and his anger burned within him."

The incidents which followed show how complete was the subjection of the wife to the husband, as well in the humbler house-

holds of his subjects as in that of the King ; and how implicit was the obedience exacted from her. In the case of Vashti, her little wilfulness was deemed sufficient ground for a divorce, as her example, in the opinion of the very wise men of the King's council, was calculated, if she escaped punishment, to excite a rebellious spirit in every woman in the kingdom. Ahasuerus particularly desires that the sentence passed upon her shall be "according to law ;" and "Memucan answered before the King and the Princes, Vashti the Queen hath not done wrong to the King only, but also to all the Princes, and to all the people that are in all the provinces of the King Ahasuerus. For this deed of the Queen shall come abroad unto all women, so that they shall despise their husbands in their eyes, when it is reported the King Ahasuerus commanded Vashti the Queen to be brought in before him, but she came not : Likewise shall the ladies of Persia and Media say this day unto all the King's princes, which have heard of the deed of the Queen. Thus shall arise too

much contempt and wrath." In fact, these eastern sages were afraid to face their wives under the influence of such an event ; and even after they had effected the ruin of the misguided Queen, they were not content till Ahasuerus was persuaded to make a solemn proclamation throughout the empire that "all the wives shall give to their husbands honour, both great and small."

The poor Queen was in some measure avenged by the remorse which seized upon her husband, when his enervated mind recovered from his protracted orgies ; for in the words of the Sacred Volume, "he remembered Vashti, and what was decreed against her." Though the parasites of his depraved court assembled, by public proclamation, all the most beautiful women of his vast empire, in the hope of dispelling his melancholy, it was not till he beheld the innocent face of Esther that he deigned to accept consolation. Her transcendant attractions enchained his admiration, and procured her speedy elevation to the regal dignity. This step, when

once resolved on, was carried out with some formality, evidently in accordance with established usage; and, to mark that no ceremony was omitted, it is recorded that Ahasuerus “set the royal crown upon her head, and made her Queen instead of Vashti.” The coronation, or investiture, was succeeded by a banquet, the nuptial feast, which the royal bridegroom threw open “to all his princes, and his servants, even Esther’s feast, and he made a release to the provinces, and gave gifts, according to the estate of the King.”

The queenly crown, though it might dazzle her ambition, by no means secured for its possessor a share in the government, or even the precarious advantage of the royal ear; and, when first importuned by Mordecai, Esther had been thirty days without once seeing the King. Nor, indeed, could she present herself before him unbidden, except at the risk of her life; and in excusing her inaction on this great occasion, she reminded Mordecai “That whosoever, whether man or woman, shall come unto the

King in the inner court, who is not called, there is one law of his to put him to death, except such to whom the King shall hold out the golden sceptre, that he may live." Ahasuerus, who usually acted more like a wild beast than a man, condescended to exercise his clemency, when the trembling Queen appeared before his throne, and thus, more fortunate than her predecessor, she escaped the cruel rigour of the law. The heart of the ruthless monarch was tamed by her beauty; at her request his barbarous design of slaughtering the Jews was abandoned; and the melting plea of a woman, more persuasive than the eloquence of wicked counsellors, saved a whole people from destruction.

Aryenis, or, as it seems more proper to call her, Vashti, was the mother of two royal children—Cyxares the Second, mentioned in the Bible as Darius the Mede, who succeeded his father on the throne, and a daughter, named Mandane. The latter, on approaching the critical age of womanhood, became a source of uneasiness to her jealous

father, whose slumbers had been disturbed by a dream, which, being submitted to the Magi, was interpreted as denoting that she should become the mother of a son, who would subvert the throne of Persia, and subdue by his prowess the whole Asiatic continent. To prevent such a result, the King gave her in marriage to a Persian of inferior rank, whose humble means, he imagined, would prevent their offspring from executing, if not from entertaining, any ambitious projects ; but a second dream having revived his alarm, just as his daughter gave birth to a son, he tore the helpless infant from his mother's arms, and gave secret orders for his destruction. The task was confided to Harpagus, his principal minister, whose devotion and fidelity had won his confidence ; but it was more easily conceived than executed. Harpagus revealed his instructions to his wife ; and the tender instincts of woman, ever shrinking from violence, and especially aroused by the sight of guileless infancy, urged her to intercede for the little innocent, and

induce her ferocious husband to spare his life. Though she did not completely succeed, her entreaties and representations made such an impression on Harpagus, that he determined not to dip his own hands in the child's blood; but in order to carry out the King's command, he sent for one of the royal herdsmen, named Mitrdates, and enjoined him, on pain of death, to convey the infant into Media, and there leave him exposed on the bleakest part of a desolate mountain. This heartless design, however, was prevented by another woman—Cyno, or Spaco, the herdsman's wife, who, on her husband's return home, discovered the child, was won by his beauty and endearing looks, and, worming from Mitrdates the secret of his birth, prevailed on him by her tears and supplications to evade the orders of Harpagus, and bring up the royal infant as their own son.

Thus two women preserved to history and to mankind the great Cyrus, who, if his exploits conferred little real benefit on his species, was yet the most august of Asiatic

despots, and ranks with the most illustrious and renowned conquerors. His name possesses a peculiar interest for posterity, from its association with the sublime denunciations of the Prophets, particularly with those of Isaiah (Isaiah xlv.), more than a century before his birth ; and, in his wonderful preservation as an infant, we may recognize the overruling providence of the Almighty, which had so long predestined him for an instrument of His will and His vengeance. It is said that Cyrus himself was forcibly struck by the language of Isaiah, when, after the capture of Babylon, the prophetic verse was pointed out to him by his Jewish officers, and he saw his very name recorded on the ancient scroll.

Singular it is that a monarch who owed his deliverance from an early death to the gentle sympathies of woman, should, after a career of unequalled glory, receive from a woman's hand the most signal overthrow. The richest territories of Asia, subdued by his arms, could not satisfy the rapacious ambition of Cyrus, and, in an inauspicious



moment, he cast his eyes on the territory of the Massagetæ, which extended from the borders of his extensive dominions, where the broad stream of the Araxes formed a natural boundary, to the towering mountains of the Caucasus. This immense plain was inhabited by a hardy and savage race, living in a state of nature, but who, uncorrupted by Asiatic luxury, preferred death to the loss of their freedom. The government was held by a Queen—Tomyris, a woman of indomitable spirit, but who felt no interest in the elevation of her sex; and the women of the Massagetæ, if we may credit the statement of Herodotus, had lost every better instinct of the human heart. Cyrus, aware of the difficulty of entering the country, sent an embassy to Tomyris with a proposal of marriage: but the shrewd Queen penetrated his object, and rejected the overture with disdain. He then advanced rapidly with his army, and was preparing to throw a bridge over the river, when a message from Tomyris, who was calmly awaiting the attack, interrupted his proceedings, and

placed the contest on a new footing. "King of the Medes," said the warrior Queen, by the mouth of her envoy, "desist from your great exertions; for you cannot be certain that they will succeed; and having desisted, be content with your own dominions, and suffer me to reign over mine. But if you will not attend to my advice, and prefer everything before peace—in a word, if you are very anxious to make trial of the Massagetæ, toil no longer in throwing a bridge over the river, but do you cross to our side, while we retire three days' march, or if you had rather receive us at your side, do you the like." Cyrus, who believed himself to be under the special protection of Heaven, accepted this bold challenge, in opposition to the advice and remonstrances of his counsellors, and crossed the river. In the first conflict, he feigned a retreat, leaving his camp to the Massagetæ, who, unaccustomed to so much luxury, were speedily overcome by the Persian wines, and, while in this condition, were again attacked by Cyrus, and put completely to

the rout. The base stratagem greatly exasperated Tomyris, particularly as her son was among its victims; and she sent another message to Cyrus, threatening if he did not immediately quit her territories, that she would glut him with blood. Cyrus still advancing, the two armies met in a sanguinary battle, which Herodotus, who took great pains to arrive at the facts, describes as the most obstinate that ever was fought between barbarians. It terminated in the total defeat of the Persians, Cyrus himself falling on the field. Tomyris, who retained no characteristic of her sex, inhumanly exulted over his corpse, and filling a skin with blood, thrust his head into the pool, exclaiming "Thou hast indeed ruined me, though I am victorious in battle, but I survive to keep my word, and glut thee with blood."

Cyrus was succeeded by his son Cambyzes, the conqueror of Egypt, a barbarous and despicable tyrant, who introduced the custom of intermarrying with sisters, which afterwards became so common in Persia. Being desirous of marrying his sister Meroc,

he consulted the Persian judges as to the legality of the union, and, afraid to oppose his wishes, they informed him, after a long conference, that though they could find no statute which sanctioned such a match, there was a law that the King of Persia could do whatever he pleased, and, therefore, if he chose to make Meroc his wife, the marriage must be perfectly legal. But the queenly diadem could not reconcile Meroc to a fate so lamentable, particularly as Cambyses, in a fit of jealousy, had recently put her favourite brother, the brave Smerdis, to death, and the splendours of a barbaric court failed to soothe her suffering mind. One day, she was present at a fight between a lion and a whelp, contrived for the entertainment of Cambyses, when a second whelp, seeing the lion gain the advantage, flew to the assistance of its mate, on which Meroc burst into tears, and being asked by the King the reason of her emotion, replied that the spectacle reminded her forcibly of the fate of Smerdis, who had been slain, not by a stranger, but by his own brother, while

here the very beasts of the forest remembered the tie of affinity, and nobly stood by each other. This answer so enraged Cambyzes, that he rushed on the unhappy Queen before the court, and, by an inhuman kick, put an end at once to her sorrows and her life.

Cambyzes perished miserably, by an accident which, from its resemblance to an outrage he had committed on the Egyptian Apis, was regarded by a superstitious age as a judgment of the gods; and his last agonies were aggravated by the intelligence that one of the Magi, bearing the same name as his murdered brother, and claiming to be the real Smerdis, had taken advantage of his absence from Persia to usurp the throne. This imposture, which baffled the scrutiny of the wisest of the Persians, was destined to be unmasked by a woman. One of the seven princes of Persia, Otanes, a man of invincible spirit, had a daughter in the royal household, who had been married to the late King, and now fell to his successor; and, being assured by Cambyzes that

his brother Smerdis was dead, he conceived a suspicion that the occupant of the throne was Smerdis the magus, particularly as the new monarch shut himself up in the citadel, never showing himself to the people, or summoning the great nobles to his presence. By bribing a chamberlain, Otanes contrived to send a message to Phædyma, his daughter, acquainting her with his surmise, and desiring to know if it were a fact, at the same time instructing her, if she had no personal knowledge of Smerdis the prince, to make inquiries on the subject of the Princess Atossa, his sister, who was also an inmate of the palace. The reply of Phædyma confirmed the suspicions of her father; for she informed him that having never seen Smerdis the prince, she was unable to speak to his identity; and as to communicating with Atossa, it was impossible, as the ladies of the palace were now all kept in separate apartments, and unable to hold any intercourse with each other. Otanes then remembered that Smerdis the magus, when a young man, had

had his ears cut off by Cambyzes, as a punishment for some grave offence; and, by a second message, he apprised Phædyma of the circumstance, and adjured her to ascertain, on the first opportunity, whether the King had ears or not, as if not, there could be no doubt that he was Smerdis the magus. Phædyma undertook the task; and one night, when the magus was asleep, cautiously raised his tresses of false hair, and feeling for his ears, found that her father's suspicions were correct. She speedily made him acquainted with her discovery, and he lost no time, after taking the advice of his wife, in summoning the other six princes, and informing them of the imposture. His confederates were no less astonished than enraged; but, at first, they hesitated how to proceed, in an exigency so unparalleled, till Darius, who was distinguished for his great resolution, recommended that they should force their way at once into the palace, and put the usurper to death. The proposal was warmly seconded by Gobryas,

who concluded by saying, "Friends, shall we ever have a better opportunity to recover the sovereign power, or if we shall be unable to do so, to die? seeing we who are Persians are governed by a Medic magus, and one without ears. I therefore give my voice that we yield to Darius, and that on breaking up this conference, we go nowhere else than straight to the magus."

Meanwhile, the magi, fearing discovery, sought, by gifts and promises, to gain over Prexaspes, who had been employed by Cambyzes to superintend the execution of Smerdis, and, pretending to fall into their design, he suffered them to lead him to the top of a high tower, whence he was to harangue the people, and declare that Smerdis was still alive, and now reigned over them. But Prexaspes, instead of carrying out their wishes, loudly proclaimed from the tower that he had really killed the brother of Cambyzes, and that the throne was usurped by one of the magi; and then, imprecating a malediction on the Persians if they submitted to such an imposture, threw



himself headlong from the height, perishing on the spot. In the confusion that ensued, the seven conspirators gained access to the citadel, reached the presence-chamber, and slew both the impostor and his brother. The people, stimulated by their example, made a general attack on the magi, many of whom fell victims to their fury, and the day was afterwards commemorated by an annual festival, called "The Slaughter of the Magi," during which it was dangerous for a magus to appear in the streets, or cross the threshold of his own dwelling.

On the death of the pretended King, the seven conspirators assembled to consider who should take his place on the vacant throne, when Darius, by an ingenious trick, secured the prize for himself, and became the husband both of Phædyma and Atossa.

Atossa, as the daughter of Cyrus, and a woman of great beauty, was the favourite of Darius, and to her it was owing that Persian ambition was first directed to Greece. At this time, there lived at the court of Persia a Greek physician, who,

having performed a remarkable cure on the King, was rewarded with a large revenue, and a seat at the royal table, but strictly prohibited from returning to Greece; and, amidst the luxuries of his splendid captivity, he pined for the free air of his native land. While thus dejected, he was privately informed by Atossa that she was suffering severely from a cancer, the existence of which she desired to conceal from Darius; and he undertook to effect a complete cure of the disease, on a promise that, when this was accomplished, she should obtain the King's consent to his leaving Persia. Democedes—such was the physician's name—soon fulfilled his task, and it remained for the obliged Queen to redeem her word. Considering how this could be done, one day, when entertaining Darius, she broke out into an eloquent commendation of great actions, admonishing the King that they should be the first object with a powerful monarch, and that, instead of consuming his life in idleness, he should now be leading his army on a career of conquest, adding

new territories to the Persian empire. Darius acknowledged the justice of her observations, and, to show his thirst for glory, assured her that at that very moment he was making the most extensive preparations for the invasion of Scythia, which he determined to conduct in person, and hoped to bring to a triumphant issue. "Give up the thought, O King," replied Atossa, "of marching first against the Scythians, for they will be in your power whenever you choose, but take my advice, and lead an army into Greece, for from the account I have heard, I am anxious to have Lacedæmonian, Argive, Athenian, and Corinthian attendants, and you have in your court the fittest man to inform you of everything concerning Greece. I mean Democedes." The answer of Darius was just what she wished. "Lady," said the King, "since you think it better that I should first reduce Greece, I will send Democedes there, in company with some Persians, to report on the condition of the country, and act accordingly." Thus the Queen obtained permission for Democedes

to repair to Greece, but, by the King's command, he was so jealously watched by his companions, that it was not till he reached Crotona, his native city, that he found means to escape from their custody and claim the protection of his countrymen. Darius was greatly enraged at his escape ; but was unable, from the operations he had commenced against Scythia, to carry out his purpose of invading Greece, and he bequeathed this project to his son Xerxes, who miserably failed in the attempt.

Xerxes, whose name has become a proverb for arrogance and folly, was not the eldest son of Darius, although, contrary to Persian custom, he was appointed his heir, claiming this priority in right of his mother Atossa, who was the daughter of Cyrus, while the mothers of the other sons of the King were only daughters of nobles. Herodotus intimates, however, that such a plea would hardly have been admitted, if it had not been seconded by the intrigues of Atossa, whose influence over the King was unbounded ; and we may suppose that Darius

was also won by the personal appearance of Xerxes; for, of the five millions who are said to have followed his standard into Greece, the Hellenic historian assures us that none could compare in stature or beauty with their barbaric leader. Still, his elevation, by which his elder brothers were put aside, was undoubtedly owing mainly to Atossa, who was so loved by Darius that he caused her image to be made of beaten gold, and possibly placed it in the temple. Herodotus, indeed, mentions Arlystone as the person who received this affectionate tribute, but Atossa appears to have been the only surviving daughter of Cyrus, and Arlystone may have been but another name of the same princess.

It was usual for the wives of the Kings, and even of the nobles, to accompany them in their warlike expeditions, and thus share the hazards, if not the fatigues of the campaign. Xerxes was accompanied in his march to Greece by his favourite wives, amongst whom was Queen Amestris, who,

many years afterwards, in her old age, commanded fourteen noble children to be buried alive at the Nine Ways, near the city of Eion, to evince her gratitude to the gods for granting her so long a life. Eion, desecrated by this barbarous sacrifice, was the city so resolutely defended by Boges, the Persian governor, on the flight of Xerxes from Greece, when, rather than surrender, he put his wives to death, consumed their bodies on a funeral pile, and then threw himself into the flames.

At the battle of Issus, the wife, mother, and daughter of Darius the Second, the son and successor of Xerxes, were captured, with the Persian camp, by Alexander the Great, and his treatment of the royal prisoners ranks among the noblest actions of that renowned warrior. The chariot of Darius having been taken on the field, with his bow, shield, and cloak lying within, it was thought that the monarch himself had fallen, and this unfounded rumour was quickly reported to the captive ladies, and threw them into

transports of grief. Their wailings and lamentations, breaking forth in the silence of night, reached the ear of Alexander, and he sent one of his principal officers with a message of condolence to the Queen, assuring her that Darius had neither been slain nor captured, but had, on quitting the field, outstripped pursuit, and must then be in safety. Next day, he went personally to the tent of his fair prisouers, accompanied by his favourite general Hephæstion. On their entry, the mother of Darius fell at the feet of Hephæstion, supposing, from his majestic appearance, that he was the great hero, but Hephæstion drew back, and pointed to Alexander, who, advancing, raised the embarrassed lady from the ground, exclaiming that she had made no mistake, as Hephæstion was indeed his other self, and worthy to be accounted his equal. He then turned to the trembling Queen, who was bathed in tears, and endeavoured, by a few well-timed words, to soothe and reassure her, declaring that he had no personal quarrel with Darius, but was contending only for the empire of Asia,

and that she and her daughters, while they remained under his care, should be treated with all the consideration due to their sex, character, and exalted station. Darius, when informed of his conduct on this occasion, burst into tears, and passionately exclaimed—"O, great God! who disposest of the affairs of Kings among men, preserve to me the empire of the Persians and Medes as thou gavest it; but if it be thy will that I am to be no longer King of Asia, let Alexander, in preference to all others, succeed to my power."

But it was not always as mere camp followers that the Queens and Princesses of Persia accompanied the royal armies. Queen Artemisia, an ally and tributary of Persia, sailed in the fleet of Xerxes, when he invaded Greece, as commander of a squadron; and "of the whole fleet," says Herodotus, "she furnished the most renowned ships, next to the Sidonians; and of all the allies, gave the best advice to the King." She was strongly opposed to a naval attack on the Greeks, whom she considered invincible on the



waves; and it was hoped by her enemies that her opposition would give mortal offence to Xerxes, who, relying on his superior numbers, was eager to measure his strength with the famous triremes of Athens. But the monarch, who had the highest opinion of her sagacity, appreciated the sentiments by which she was actuated; and the event was equally demonstrative of her courage and her wisdom. In the memorable naval engagement at Salamis, her ship was seen in the thick of the fight; and being hard pressed by the enemy, and seeing no other way of escape, she adopted the bold manœuvre of running down the ship of Damasithymus, King of the Calyndians, and thus extricated herself from her perilous situation. Xerxes, who was a spectator of the conflict from a commanding point on the shore, could not repress his admiration at this dexterous feat, and loudly exclaimed—"My men have become women, and my women, men." The Athenians were no less mortified at her escape, considering it a great indignity to be baffled by a

woman ; and the senate proclaimed a reward of ten thousand drachmas to whoever should effect her capture. Artemisia, however, was not destined to fall into their hands, as on the King's departure from the army, he directed her to proceed to Ephesus, in charge of his sons, and she did not again engage in the war.

We have seen that the wives of the Kings were sometimes made prisoners by the enemy ; and those of the nobles, who also accompanied their husbands, were subject to the same casualty. At the sanguinary engagement at Plataea, the wife of Pharandates, the Persian commander, was found on the field of battle, covered with gold and gems ; and threw herself on her knees before Pausanias, exclaiming, “ King of Sparta, deliver me, your suppliant, from captive servitude ; for you have thus far benefited me, by destroying those men, who pay no regard either to gods or heroes. I am by birth a Coan, daughter to Hegetarides ; and the Persians having taken me away by force from Cos, kept me.” The reply of Pausa-

nias instantly dispelled her apprehensions. "Lady," he said, "be of good heart, both as a suppliant, and moreover, if you have spoken the truth, and are indeed the daughter of Hegetarides of Cos, he is the best friend of all I have in those parts." And he delivered her into the charge of the ephori, and afterwards, when he had completely routed the Persians, saw her conducted in safety to her native place.

The beautiful Roxana, who shared the diadem and ruled the heart of Alexander, was a prize of war, having fallen into the hero's hands at the capture of the Bactrian stronghold of the Rock ; and it serves to illustrate the miserable social position of woman in that age, that Alexander was considered to have acted with great magnanimity, or perhaps folly, in raising her to the rank of his wife, since the right of conquest had made her his slave. She enjoyed her elevation but a few months, when the Macedonian King was snatched away by death, but her expectant condition preserved to her the name, though not the authority of

Queen, for some time longer. This ascendancy, however, could not reconcile her to the degrading usages of the time, and of her country, which admitted inferior wives to a humble share of her privileges, as well as of the affections of her husband ; and the remains of Alexander were still lying unburied, when in a paroxysm of jealous hate, she seized his mistress Statira, stabbed both her and her sister, and then threw their bodies into a well, which she immediately filled up. Her violence and her guilt, aggravated by such horrible circumstances, drew down upon her a terrible, though deferred retribution ; and having fallen into the power of Cassander, she was thrown into a dungeon in the citadel of Amphipolis, and there, with her youthful son, murdered by the unscrupulous Glaucias.

Such barbarous institutions as prevailed among the Persians in reference to women, naturally destroyed, in course of time, all those gentle feelings which we have been brought to consider as the characteristics of the sex ; and Persian women are represented

as constantly committing the most frightful atrocities. The unnatural cruelty of Queen Amestris, the favourite consort of Xerxes, at the Nine Ways, in Greece, has already been mentioned, and her treatment of the wife of Masistes was, if possible, still more revolting. This ill-fated woman had had the misfortune to excite the admiration of Xerxes, but she firmly rejected his disgraceful overtures, and, being the wife of his brother, he shrank from carrying her off by force. To bring himself more in her way, which he thought would advance his designs, he gave her daughter in marriage to his son, thus uniting the two families by closer ties, and removing those barriers which Eastern jealousy opposed to familiar intercourse. But Artanyte—such was the name of the younger princess—was not animated by the virtuous principles of her mother, and she soon contrived to attract the attention of Xerxes to herself, though the busy scandal of the court persisted in giving them to the wife of Masistes. At this critical juncture, Queen Amestris presented Xerxes

wieh a large, various-coloured, and sumptuous mantle, which she had woven with her own hands ; the fatal garment was seen by Artanyte, who, to annoy Amestris, begged it as a gift from the King, and imprudently appeared with it in public. The Queen, not suspecting any ill-will on the part of Artanyte, supposed that this unprovoked insult had been contrived by her mother, to show her power over Xerxes ; but, concealing her resentment, she waited patiently till the King gave his birthday feast, at which it was customary for him to grant any request she might make, and then, to his horror, asked him to give her the wife of Masistes. In vain the monarch tried to evade her request, offering, like Herod, whatever other gift she might choose, even to the half of his kingdom : the inexorable Queen coveted nothing so much as vengeance, and that was now in her power. Having seized the virtuous and innocent princess, she had her conveyed into the interior of the palace ; and there, summoning the royal guards, subjected her to the most cruel mutilation,

chopping off her nose and her breasts, and cutting out her tongue, which she threw to the dogs, and then sent the wretched lady home to her husband. Masistes, maddened by the treatment she had received, sought redress by arms, and endeavouring to excite an insurrection against the King, was killed in the attempt.

These intermarriages of the royal family continued to foster domestic unhappiness, and great social crimes, in every generation ; and so late as the time of the great Mithridates, we find that monarch, whose arms had advanced him to the empire of Asia, struggling with similar influences, and finally perishing through the infamous disloyalty of one of his children.

Besides his renowned son, Mithridates the First left two daughters, both of whom, according to a custom very prevalent in Asia, bore the name of Laodice. One became the wife of her brother, the great warrior ; the other, shortly after the accession of the latter to the throne, was given in marriage to the King of Cappadocia.

The career of each furnished melancholy evidence of the impolicy and infelicity of such compulsory unions. Mithridates soon left his young wife to go on a tour in disguise through Asia Minor; but after an absence of some months, returned in time to share in the great public festivities on the birth of an heir to his crown. His Queen, however, had in the meantime tasted the sweets of power, and secretly formed other connexions, by which she was now urged to engage in a conspiracy for the assassination of her husband, and the usurpation of his throne. A similar design was conceived by her sister, the Queen of Cappadocia, who, aided by the cabals of an Eastern palace, successfully carried out her object, and, for a time, retained the government. But the wife of Mithridates, though not wanting in supporters, had to contend with more formidable obstacles: the conspiracy was discovered, the guilt of the miserable Queen established, and, after a formal examination, she was condemned to death.



It was some time after these tragic events that Mithridates, while holding his court at Stratonica, contracted a marriage with the beautiful and accomplished Hypsicrates, a spouse worthy of his virtues, and who offers an eminent example of what can be effected by a noble and magnanimous woman. This gifted princess possessed the entire affection of her husband, to whom she was romantically attached, insomuch that she cheerfully shared the dangers and fatigues of his hazardous expeditions, and no doubt influenced him, by her example and aspirations, in his heroic struggles with Rome. On the defeat of Mithridates by Lucullus, in the mountain passes of the Crimea, she showed her love for him in a signal manner, proving how well she deserved, by her superior qualities, the preference he uniformly displayed for her. The ruined monarch had sent a message to the ladies of the court from the field of battle, enjoining them rather to die than fall into the hands of the Romans and so completely were they fascinated by his splendid character, that only

one of the number, probably a stranger, repined at her fate. The others desired the messenger, if he should ever again see the King, to thank him for his care of them, and then put an end to their existence—a shocking proof of the barbarity exercised towards their sex in those days, and which they expected to experience from the Romans. But Hypsocrates, though not fearing death, could not reconcile herself to a separation from Mithridates; and, mounting a fleet horse, she succeeded, after incredible exertions, and a narrow escape from the enemy, in overtaking him, when her presence restored his hopes and his energy. In a subsequent engagement on the banks of the Euphrates, she appeared in arms, dressed as a soldier, and mounted on a superb Persian charger, in the ranks of his guards, and fought by his side through the whole of the bloody day. When the royal army was seized with a panic, she placed herself with her undaunted husband at the head of eight hundred chosen men, and cut her way through the heavy-armed legions

of Pompey. But the power of Mithridates was now for a time broken, and he was obliged to tear himself from his faithful followers, and seek safety in an obscure retreat. Accompanied only by his lovely wife, he pursued his way over rugged mountain paths, or across inhospitable deserts, an outcast and a fugitive, receiving from the devoted Hypsicrates more attention and consideration than when he sat on his throne. In his service the incomparable Queen could undergo any hardship, or perform the most menial office, and every night she carefully groomed his horse, and accoutred it for his use in the morning. Such was her devotion that, even in this depth of his adversity, Mithridates exclaimed that he should never cease to be a King, so long as he possessed Hypsicrates.

Hypsicrates was not destined to be present at his death ; but in that bitter hour, when he was betrayed by those whom he most trusted, under circumstances of the blackest treachery, two of his daughters, Mithradata and Nissa, evinced the fidelity and devotedness of woman, and, by the voluntary sacri-

fice of their lives, shared his last agonies. The great monarch, by one of those prodigious efforts which astonished and confounded his enemies, had again assembled a numerous army, and was marching into Europe, intending to cross the Alps into Italy, when his son Pharnaces raised a sedition among the troops, and persuaded them to revolt. In the middle of the night, Mithridates was aroused by a cry of "Pharnaces is King," and hardly had time to fly with his daughters from the camp, and take refuge in the neighbouring mountains. Then he perceived that the crisis of his fortunes had arrived, and drawing from his vest a vial of poison, with which he was always provided, he would have drunk off the deadly potion, but was prevented by his daughters, who, with tears and entreaties, claimed the right of dying first. Their request was granted, and the princesses soon expired, while Mithridates, becoming impatient at the slow operation of the poison, threw himself on the sword of his freedman, and thus closed his career.

These incidents serve to illustrate the light value which the Persians, and the nations dependent on, and in alliance with them, set on the lives of women; and the same sentiments still prevail in many parts of the East. When the Persian army sacked a town, the women were often inhumanly butchered; and the horrible atrocities perpetrated by Chosroes and Sapor, who sat on the throne of Cyrus during the inglorious decline of the Roman empire, make us blush for our species. From time immemorial, if a Persian of any rank committed a crime, his punishment was inflicted equally on his wives; and Daniel mentions that the innocent wives of his enemies were thrown, together with their husbands and children, into the lions' den, by the special command of Darius. That great King, however, occasionally relaxed the rigour of the law, and an instance of his clemency is recorded in the case of the wife of Intaphernes, one of the seven princes, who, by their conspiracy against Smerdis the Impostor, seated Darius on the throne. Intaphernes, presuming on this great ser-

vice, presented himself at the palace, and insisted on entering the royal presence unannounced, but was prevented by the doorkeepers, and, enraged at their opposition, he drew his scimitar, and cut off their noses and ears, which he strung on the bridle of his horse, and then tied in derision round their necks. The mutilated domestics hastened to implore vengeance from the King, who was exasperated alike by the outrage and the insult, and, without further inquiry, commanded Intaphernes and his wife, with their children and all their relations, to be instantly led to execution. But the agonizing cries of the innocent lady, as she passed the gates of the palace, reached the ear of the monarch; and, touched by her miserable fate, he sent a reprieve for herself, at the same time granting a pardon to any one of the others whom she should select. She gave the preference to her brother, which so surprised Darius, that on learning the fact, he sent a chamberlain to her with the following message—"Lady, the King inquires the reason why, leaving your husband and children, you have chosen that your

brother should survive, as he is not so near related to you as your children, and less endeared to you than your husband." To which the unhappy woman replied—"O, King! I may have another husband, if God will, and other children if I lose these; but as my father and mother are no more, I cannot have another brother, and, therefore, I have chosen him before them all"—a speech, we are told, which so pleased the despot, that he granted her also the life of her eldest son.

In all ages the Persians regarded women in the light of chattels, without rights, without natural sympathies, without feelings. In a treaty concluded by Chosroes with the Romans, it was stipulated that he should receive from Byzantium the annual tribute of a thousand virgins, and this imperious tyrant imprisoned within the walls of his palace no less than three thousand wives. But nature, insulted and outraged, defied his power, and made his very passions minister to her revenge. Woman he might enslave, trample upon, sacrifice—her hand and person he might secure—but the sanctuary of her

heart, the holy refuge of her affections, was beyond his reach. Rome had presented him with the lovely and pious Shirene, who, by her matchless beauty, her rare graces, talents, and accomplishments, brought even him to understand that there is a spirituality in woman's nature, more potent and more captivating than mere personal attractions, let these be ever so striking. But Shirene, while she was forced to share his throne, rejected his love : the great King grasped her hand, but her heart was given to a slave ; and all the devotion of Chosroes, all the diversions and pleasures his ingenuity could contrive, or power and treasures command, never tempted her to smile.

Nor was this the worst evil brought upon him by his utter disregard of the ties and natural instincts of humanity. Conjugal affection is the fruitful germ of filial duty ; and when we despise the one, we virtually relinquish the other. The sons of the tyrant's different wives viewed each other with the bitterest hatred, and, as they grew up, their mutual jealousies found a new object in their father,



who, at length, was seized and deposed by his son Siroes, thrown into a dungeon, starved, tortured, and finally put to death, after eighteen of his children had been murdered before his eyes. The usurper, having thus sated his cruelty, rushed into the presence of Shirene, for whom he had conceived a guilty passion, and claimed her as his bride and Queen. The ill-fated beauty asked first to be shown the corpse of Chosroes, which still lay, gashed and bloody, in an obscure apartment of the palace, and being conducted to the spot, she plunged a dagger into her breast, and fell lifeless on the same bier.

Polygamy, which the ancient laws of the Medes not only permitted to every class, but actually enforced, was undoubtedly, as in the case of Shirene, the unvarying cause of the misery of Persian women, and of the dissensions and internal discords of families. Marriages were also contracted at a tender age, before the mind had acquired any perception of the moral nature or the obligations of such a union, and this was a

fertile source of domestic unhappiness. The children of one wife were arrayed in enmity against the children of another, and frequently conspired to effect the ruin of a favoured consort, or even to take the life of their father. Nor could the sternest authority smother the resentments and rivalries which continually grew out of a system wholly at variance with the fundamental laws of nature.

The marriages of the Medes were consecrated by a curious ceremony. The plighted pair, in the presence of their mutual relatives and friends, made an incision in each other's arms, and mingled their blood, which was received into a goblet, and drunk as a pledge of harmony, by the bride and bridegroom. The nuptials were then registered, and celebrated by a feast, extending over several days.

Divorce, considered but a trifling punishment among the ancients, could be obtained on the slightest grounds. Sometimes it was dictated by mere caprice, or by personal dislike, and any unprincipled reprobate could

discard his wife at pleasure. A custom prevails to this day among the Persians, when they are going to battle, of conditionally divorcing their wives, numbers declaring that the divorce shall take effect unless they return victorious.

The marriages of the modern Persians retain many of the usages practised by their earliest forefathers. When the union is agreed on, the intended husband, or his father—if he has not arrived at an independent age, settles a dower upon the lady, proportioned to her rank in life; and the ring is sent in due form, and presents interchanged between the two families. The day before the wedding the bride anoints herself, and stains her hands with a red dye, made of hennah; and the next morning she is bathed, perfumed, and dressed in her most sumptuous apparel. She then sits in state, on a rich cushion, and receives offerings from her family and her female acquaintance. This ceremony concluded, she is enveloped in a scarlet veil, and mounted on horseback, when a procession of horsemen, with the young girls and women of the family, and

their friends, convey her, with joyous shouts and music, to the dwelling of the bridegroom. The happy swain, attired in all the finery he can buy or borrow, receives her at the threshold, and conducts her into the house, where he has already assembled his friends, two of whom, if he is either very young or very bashful, act as his deputies, and divert the company with a thousand tricks, often played off at the expense of some of their guests, but which, on such occasions, no one is disposed to resent. The proceedings close with a feast, and, when the parties are wealthy, this is often protracted over thirty or forty days, and always continues for three.

The ceremonies, strictly followed in towns, slightly vary among the wandering nomade tribes, who dwell in tents, and celebrate their nuptials in the dreary solitudes of the desert. As the bride is being conducted in solemn silence from the tent of her mother to her future home, she is met about midway by the bridegroom, who carries in his hand an orange or an apple, and, when sufficiently near to make sure of his aim, throws it at the veiled maiden with all his force, as the

harder he hits her, the more fortunate she will be esteemed. Instantly the lady's friends raise a great outcry, and make a rush at the ungallant bridegroom, who spurs off, and, being mounted on the fleetest horse of his tribe, generally contrives to outstrip his pursuers, and arrive first at his tent. Should he, however, be overtaken, his horse becomes the prize of his captor, though, if he is in poor circumstances, it may be redeemed for two or three pieces of silver. When the bride reaches the tent of the sham recreant, the girls and women of her party, clinging round her horse, implore her not to alight, while the friends of the bridegroom are equally importunate on the other side, though they blend their invitations with urgent entreaties that she will relinquish a portion of her dower. To this she seldom consents, as it is her only safeguard from ill-usage; but sometimes, with the confiding weakness of her sex, she readily complies. Then she descends from her horse, and, amidst the renewed opposition of her friends, takes the fatal step of entering the tent—to her indeed the house of bondage.

## VII.

## INDIA.

INDIA—the land of the enervated Hindoo—has in all ages been considered the gem of Asia. Poetry and fiction have united with history to celebrate the fertility of her soil, the endless variety of her productions, the profusion of her mineral wealth, and the diversity, grandeur, and beauty of her scenery. Traversed by mighty rivers—the Indus, the Ganges, and the Hoogley—flanked by the cloud-capped chain of the Himalayas, whose awful peaks are swept by perpetual tempests—embracing immense valleys, and vast plains, which, if not clothed with primeval forests, teem with

rich and varied produce — and paved, beneath the fruitful ground, with the precious metals, or still more precious jewels, it might justly be pronounced the garden of the earth. Here Nature had scattered her bounty around with a prodigal and unsparing hand. Far from its shores the mariner inhaled the balmy odour of its spices ; and the merchants of Tyre and Tarshish, descending the Arabian Gulf, or crossing the arid deserts of Persia, dispersed over the world, from the earliest times, the multifarious fruits and products of its soil, with the gold of its rivers and the delicate silk of its looms. Nor were stranger features wanting to heighten the effect of the picture. The wide frontier of India, where nature had placed the Indus as a moat, or the inaccessible Himalayas as a rampart, was guarded by a host of elephants, each bearing on his huge back a tower, garrisoned by armed men ; its cities extended for miles, and enclosed within their walls of jasper and granite, marble palaces, and temples endowed with fabulous treasures ;

and, to this day, the fiercest beasts of the forest roam at will through its wilds, its jungles, and its mountains.

The early history of this great peninsula, like that of most countries, is enshrouded in the mists of fable, and no reliance can be placed on the archives of such celestial potentates as the Kings of the Sun and the Kings of the Moon. These, however, yield us, amidst heaps of fiction, some grains of truth, and the Scriptural student is interested to find, in the maze of Indian history, a tradition that the whole earth was once submerged by a deluge, by which every living thing was destroyed. The world is said to have been repeopled by the god Brumhæ, who divided himself into two parts, one of which became Swayumbhoovi, the Hindoo Noah, and the other his wife. The védés, which records these facts, is the earliest chronicle of the Hindoos, and is supposed to have been commenced in the time of King David, or about a thousand years before the Christian era. But our first authentic information respecting Hindoostan commences



with the reign of Mahmid, Sultan of Ghuzni, who hurled the bolt of Mohammedan conquest at its tottering thrones. The peninsula, extending from the extremity of Persia to the Southern Ocean, was then divided among tribes of Raiputs, who held their fiefs by feudal tenure, involving military service at the call of the sovereign ; but such undisciplined and inexperienced forces were ill adapted to repel the warlike Affghans, animated as they were by religious zeal, burning with the hopes of plunder, and marching under the banner of a victorious leader. They were speedily routed ; and Mahmid, eager to extend the Mohammedan sway, next invaded the territories of Jeipal, the Brahmin ruler of Lahore. Jeipal was vanquished, and, conscious that his fortunes were irretrievable, erected a funeral pile, and threw himself into the flames. Mahmid, by disarming and decimating the people, secured his conquest, and then turned his arms against the neighbouring kingdoms. But it would be tedious, as well as irrelevant, to enumerate his successive expeditions, which were all marked by the same

revolting barbarity, and wherever he advanced, towns were sacked, temples destroyed, women and children butchered, and, in his last campaign, the number of his captives was so great, that the price of a strong man, sold into slavery, was only ten drachms, or about five English shillings.

The great achievement of Mahmid was the capture of the temple of Somnath, one of the twelve Singas or Phalli, esteemed the holiest sanctuaries of India. It was situated in Gujarik, and water was brought to this place, which was far in the interior, from the distant Ganges, that the idols might have the satisfaction of being dipped daily in their favourite stream. The temple, though a Pantheon in principle, containing all the gods of the Hindoo calendar, was especially dedicated to Siva, by his title of Swayam Nath, or Self-Existent, and was endowed with the revenues of ten thousand villages. It was held in the greatest reverence by the superstitious Hindoos, and priests devoted their daughters to the abominable service of the shrine. Mahmid, undaunted by the difficulties and dangers of

the enterprise, made his way over mountains, and across inhospitable deserts, to the sacred precincts; and after a faint struggle, became master of the pile, as well as of its untold treasures, said to surpass the wildest dreams of fiction. With this spoil, he carried off the massive gates of the edifice, the recovery of which by General Nott, in 1842, elicited from Lord Ellenborough, then Governor-General of India, the celebrated manifesto, which was so severely censured in England.

The dark mythology of the Hindoos includes whole legions of gods; and the Rev. W. Ward, from whose account of the national customs, before they were affected by European intercourse, I have derived much information, estimates their total number at three hundred and thirty millions, though all these are resolvable, in some way or other, into three principal idols, Vishnoo, Shiva, and Brúmha — into the three goddesses, Doorgu, Lūkohmēē, and Sūrūswū, and into the elements. Monkeys, trees, and logs of wood, distinguished by special peculiarities, have also been made objects of worship; and

received the senseless prayers of this benighted and besotted people. \*

Women, ever the first prey of idolatry, largely participate in the religious ceremonies. At the temple of Juggernaut, they enact all the horrible atrocities which the Holy Scriptures describe as the ancient ritual of Moloch; and when the monstrous idol is brought out of its den, to proceed in triumph through the streets, they are encouraged by the Brahmins to throw themselves under the huge wheels of his car, where they are crushed to pieces. Numbers annually devote themselves to Brúmha, by plunging into the sacred waters of the Ganges. Allahabad, on the banks of that river, is a consecrated spot, and has been polluted by these suicidal sacrifices from time immemorial. A bevy of women here enter a boat accompanied by a Brahmin, who, as they shove off from the shore, slings over the shoulder of each an earthen pan, and then assists them into the stream, holding them up till the pan, being turned aside, fills with water, when he relinquishes his grasp, and the poor victims speedily

sink. Formerly thousands of women perished annually through these revolting superstitions.

The Mohammedan power, introduced by Mahmid of Ghuzni, was ultimately established at Delhi, the capital of Hindostan, a city of great extent and magnificence ; but the descendants of Mahmid were not allowed to remain in quiet possession of their ill-acquired empire ; and, during the reign of Allah-ed-din-Khilji, hordes of Moguls, fired by the exploits of Zenghis Khan, poured over the frontier, advancing their dreaded banner to the very gates of Delhi. Here, however, they were met and defeated by the Emperor's general, the celebrated Zaffir Khan, who himself fell in the moment of victory, after slaying with his own hand a prodigious number of the enemy. The latter, indeed, were so impressed with his prowess, that they made it the subject of a proverb ; and, for ages after the battle, if the horse of a Mogul started, or evinced any alarm, its master would exclaim—"How now ! do you see Zaffir Khan ?"

The invasion of Tamerlane, or Timour the lame—so called from a personal defect—inundated India with the blood of her children. This sanguinary monster, who has been depicted by the poets as a paragon of clemency, laid Delhi in ruins, levelled cities and temples with the ground, turned the fairest provinces of the empire into deserts, and, on one occasion, slaughtered no less than a hundred thousand captives. From India he swept like a whirlwind over the neighbouring territories, and in every direction, left the same fell traces of desolation and blood.

The women of Hindostan suffered severely from the invasion of Tamerlane; but that of Nadir Shah, King of Persia, justly called the Scourge of India, almost swept them from the earth. The march of the haughty conqueror was checked for a moment by the walls of Cabul, the gate of the peninsula, where Shirza Khan, an officer of great resolution and experience, commanded the forces of the Emperor of Delhi, but Nadir, having bought over Nazir Khan,

Shirza's nephew, who was encamped without the walls, succeeded by a stratagem in entering the city. Nazir represented to his uncle that his movements were embarrassed by the women attached to the army, from a fear of their being captured by the enemy, and desired Shirza, for the sake of humanity, as well as for the relief of his troops, to afford them an asylum within the walls. This was readily agreed to by the Khan, and Nazir escorted the women into Cabul, just as the Shah, pursuant to a preconcerted arrangement, sent a message to Shirza, inviting him to a conference. While the unsuspecting general was thus engaged, Nazir threw open the gates to the invading army, and thus laid the whole of India at the feet of the perfidious Shah.

The treatment experienced by the sex during this irruption threw the ordinary horrors of war into the shade. Every instinct of humanity was outraged; every tie of nature rent; and the blood of woman, of old and young alike, flowed like water. At the capture of Delhi, the Hindoos themselves destroyed their wives and daughters,

to prevent their falling into the hands of the Persians, and these ill-fated women were burnt alive in their apartments, their husbands, as soon as they had kindled the fire, perishing with them in the flames.

The empire of Hindostan was first consolidated by Zehir-ed-din Mohammed, surnamed Baber the Tiger, King of Samarcand and Bokhara. This intrepid prince, left an orphan in his youth, was ignominiously driven from the throne of his ancestors, and after a life of the most romantic adventures, succeeded in gathering round him a band of daring freebooters, at whose head he marched five times over the frontiers of India. Ultimately he established himself at Delhi, and, subduing the adjacent provinces, founded the dynasty of the Great Mogul, which derived that name from a tradition, long since refuted, that one of the remote ancestors of Baber was a Mongolian chief.

Delhi, for ages the seat of empire, stood on the precipitous banks of the Jumna. Its stately palaces and lofty towers, its mosques and temples, interspersed with gardens and groves of trees, extended over an area of



thirty miles, and the whole was surrounded by a battlemented wall, pierced by numerous gates. Imagination fails to convey an adequate idea of this magnificent city, as it appeared in the zenith of its fame, when the full glory of an Indian sun, there not without worshippers, looked down on its thousand minarets and gilded cupolas, just rising above the walls ; and shed a glad radiance on the mighty obelisks of red granite, the graceful columns of marble, and the fresh, clear fountains which presented themselves on every side. The palace of the great Emperor in the centre of the city, realized the descriptions of Oriental romance. Floors of mosaic, columns of spotless marble, walls inlaid with silver and gold, ceilings emblazoned with all the hues of the rainbow, or disappearing, at an incredible height, in an expansive aerial dome, exhibited the beau ideal of Eastern art, in all its diversity of aspects, and the spectator concurred eagerly in the inscription on the frieze—

“ If there be an Elysium on earth,  
It is this, it is this ! ”

Such was the structure in which the potent Akhbar Khan immured his five thousand wives, selected from all the greatest families of Asia, and condemned, by the inexorable cruelty of man, to pass their lives in this superb prison. It was surrounded by extensive gardens and pleasure grounds, traversed by avenues of acacias, and labyrinthine walks, overshadowed by the dark salvadora, the exuberant banyan, or intertwining date trees; and every rare plant and flower lent its attractions to the scene. An artificial lake diffused itself in numberless little channels through every part of the garden, here flowing tranquilly on, there falling in a cascade, or rising in a fountain, while a majestic plantain flung its shade over the bank, where a pavilion of enamelled tiles, or a secluded grotto, invited the rambler to repose. Nature, indeed, conspired with art to reconcile the fair captives to their fate; but in this barbaric Eden the very garlands were chains, and doubtless many a lovely prisoner felt the same emotions as Rasselas in the Happy Valley.

Here it was that the beautiful daughter of Aurungzebe, the Lalla Rookh of Moore, spent the sunny years of her youth, jealously watched by that most vigilant of chamberlains, the Argus-eyed Fadladeen. To this sacred retreat came the gallant young King of Bokhara, when he sought the princess's hand, proclaiming, by his words and presence, that neither walls nor chamberlains could shut in the fame of her beauty, while no distance could deter him from offering his love. And it was from the gate of these enchanting gardens that the innocent Lalla, now a betrothed bride, departed in grand state, for the blissful vale of Kashmere, surrounded by her bevy of maidens in their rose-coloured veils and flowing silks, and escorted by all the beauty and all the chivalry of the imperial city.

The strict seclusion in which Hindoo ladies were kept, as well by the laws of caste as by the jealousy of their husbands, and their utter separation from all the affairs of life, necessarily opposed an almost insurmountable barrier to their appearance on

the field of history. Their influence, when they possessed any, was exerted in private, in the recesses of the palace, or the sealed chambers of the harem; and we are told of a Begum, or widowed Queen, haranguing the courtiers from behind a curtain in favour of her infant son. Nevertheless, the mind and heart of woman, rising above the difficulties of her situation, more than once overcame every obstacle, and advanced her to the summit of power. Durgautti, Queen of Gurrah, a state comprising the richest portion of the Deccan, succeeded to the throne of her husband, and, by her wise government, raised her people and kingdom to the highest pitch of prosperity. Seventy thousand towns acknowledged the benign sway of this lovely and accomplished woman, who personally superintended the direction of affairs, the management of the finances, and the administration of justice. At length, her growing power excited the apprehensions of Akhbar Khan, as her wealth, and that of her subjects, fostered and protected by just laws, provoked the cupidity of his

generals; and Asaph Khan was despatched with a large army to subdue her dominions. The heroic Queen placed herself at the head of her warriors; and exchanging her diadem for a helmet, and her sceptre for a lance, hastened to meet him in the field. Her eager soldiers were so stimulated by her example, that they advanced too hastily to the attack; and were falling out of line, when Durgautti, perceiving their disorder, with the greatest coolness ordered a halt, reformed her ranks, and enjoined the impatient troops to march on slowly, and await the signal to engage from the royal howdah. The battle was long and obstinate, but ultimately the intrepidity and genius of the Queen, who threw herself into the front of the conflict, was signally victorious; and Asaph was repulsed with great slaughter. The number of the slain, indeed, actually struck a panic into the victors, and Durgautti was prevented by their fears from following up her success, and in the night was deserted by her vizier and principal officers. Still she maintained her ground;

and when Asaph, reinforced by his artillery, and apprized of her weakened condition, advanced in the morning to renew the battle, she was the first to rush upon the enemy. At the same time, her son, Raja Reir Shaw, made a gallant charge by her side, and fell mortally wounded, which the Queen perceiving, was giving orders for his removal to the rear, when her soldiers, dismayed by his fate, fled in a body, leaving her almost alone. Her eye was now pierced by an arrow, which she tried to draw out, but the shaft, instead of yielding to her efforts, broke off at the end, leaving the steel barb in the wound, and at this moment another arrow passed through her neck, which she succeeded in extracting, but a mist seemed to gather round her, her brain whirled, and she dropped fainting into the bottom of the howdah. Her elephant was driven by Adlar, a brave officer, who, while she lay insensible, singly repulsed numbers of the enemy, but perceiving that the day was irretrievable, he urged the Queen, as she rallied, to permit him to secure her

safety by flight. Durgautti, however, indignantly rejected the proposal. "It is true," she exclaimed, in resolute accents, "we are overcome in war, but shall we ever be vanquished in honour? No! Let your dagger save me from the crime of putting a period to my own existence!" Adlar, with tears, besought her to change her resolution, but the desperate Queen seized his weapon, and plunged it into her bosom.

The great obstacles to the development of the female character among the Hindoos, as well in the present age as in times past, are idolatrous rites, the utter neglect of education, early marriages, polygamy, seclusion from social life, and the stringent laws of caste. These last have ever been, and are still, the bane of India. The castes are four in number—namely, the Brahmin, the Kshuktriyu, the Voishyu, and the Shoodru; but all these are again divided, and each subdivision, while it increases the confusion, is still distinct. Hindoo mythology regards the Brahmins as an emanation from the mouth of Brumha; the Kshuktriyus it traces

to his arms ; the Voishyus to his thigh ; and the unfortunate Shoodrus, comprehending the meanest of the people, to his feet. The Brahmins, as the inventors of the system, naturally claim the most honourable origin ; and they have also appropriated to themselves every honourable and every profitable function.

These crafty and wicked priests have contrived to fasten their withering influence on the whole fabric of Hindoo society, so as to make a prey of every individual and every incident. A birth, a marriage, or a funeral, a feast or a wake, calamities or successes, sicknesses, recovery, or death, the changes of the weather, droughts or inundations—all are pronounced occasions for the intrusion of a Brahmin, for the recital of his prayers, and the imposition of his fee. Fortunate the man whose name is odorous in the nostrils of a Brahmin ; and the poor Shoodru, instead of coveting luxuries for himself, envies his rich neighbour more for his power to feed so many Brahmins, exclaiming “Blessed kshuktriyu ! he can regale three or five Brahmins,” as the case may be.



A Brahmin's child becomes the object of superstitious observances even before he enters the world. On an appointed day, the mother expectant, attended by her female relations, anoints herself with turmeric, braids her long tresses, pares her nails, paints the sides of her feet, and then takes a bath. Meanwhile the husband offers a burnt sacrifice to Brumha; and on his wife's reappearance, they seat themselves side by side, on a bench which the women of the family, conformably to an immemorial custom, have decorated for the occasion. The household idol is now produced, and the officiating Brahmin utters incantations, which are repeated by the husband, who, as a testimony of his devotion, makes the senseless image an offering of water and butter. He then resumes his seat, and, murmuring a prayer, feeds his wife with milk, and some sprouts of *vatu*, and the ceremony concludes with an oblation to the idol, which is poured on the ground by a woman.

The Brahmins, after remaining for ages an entire caste, were divided by Bullalsendi, a

Voidi King, into three orders—namely, koolenus, shrotryus, and vungokujus ; and a glance at the regulations of these several subdivisions will show what effect such a system must have on the social position of woman. A koolenu, or Brahmin of the first class, can only marry his daughter in his own order, and if no suitable husband can be procured, she must remain unmarried. To prevent this result, which is considered a reproach, one koolenu usually marries a number of young women in his own order, some of whom he never removes from their father's house. The sons of koolenus, indeed, are in such request as husbands, that they are usually pre-engaged from infancy, while their daughters, however richly endowed, can procure only a share of a husband as an extraordinary favour. A koolenu who has one daughter is esteemed both fortunate and distinguished ; but a family of daughters is considered a dishonour ; and hence, even in the most civilized parts of India, infanticide prevails to an awful extent. But though a koolenu

lady may not marry out of her class, the men are at liberty to form what alliances they please, and a koolenu Lothario, after playing havoc among the ladies of his own order, may sell his precious remains at a high premium to the daughter of a shrotryu, who deems herself highly honoured by such an illustrious connexion. The same arbitrary rules extend to the other subdivisions, and in an equal degree, to the three lay castes, which have their bounds fixed with undiminished precision.

The Oodwahu-tutuvri, a work on the civil and canon law of the Hindoos, enumerates eight kinds of espousals as legitimate. The first is called Bramha, when the maiden is presented as a free gift to a Brahmin, which, of course, is esteemed the most auspicious and most desirable union ; Doivii ranks next, and indicates a marriage with a Brahmin at the termination of a sacrifice ; the third, styled Arshii, refers to a bride purchased from her father for two cows—certainly not an exorbitant price ; Prajaplityi, the fourth in order, describes a bridegroom who has

been so fortunate as to secure the recommendation of a Brahmin ; the fifth, Asvorū, is a money transaction ; the sixth, Gaudhurvū, intimates that the contract has been brought about by the mutual agreement of the two families concerned ; Rakshūsū, the seventh, stigmatizes the bride as a slave ; and Poishushu, the eighth and last, pronounces her to have been a victim.

The advice given in the sacred pages of the Shastru, as to the selection of a wife, breathes the national sentiment on this important subject. “ Let a person choose for his wife,” says the reverend scribe, “ a maid, whose form has no defect, who has an agreeable name, who walks gracefully like a young elephant, whose hair is moderate in quantity, and whose teeth are of reasonable size.” Not a word is said of mental endowments ; and, indeed, a Hindoo has yet to discover, by his own elevation, those most potent attractions of woman.

The Hindoo notion of beauty differs materially, as well as morally, from the European standard, and evinces the same dis-

tortion and perversion of nature. All the points are dexterously summed up in a description of Shurida, the daughter of Brumha. "This girl," says the Hindoo chronicler, "was of a yellow colour, and had a nose like the flower of resamum, her legs were taper like the plantain tree; her eyes large like the principal leaf of the lotus; her eyebrows extended to her ears; her lips were red and like the young leaves of the mango tree; her face was like the full moon; her voice like the sound of the cuckoo; her arms reached to her knees; her throat was like that of a pigeon; her loins narrow like those of a lion; her hair hung in curls down to her feet; her teeth were like the seeds of the pomegranate; and her walk like that of a drunken elephant or a goose!"

The women of Hindoostan, like those of most Eastern countries, paint the eyelids, and dye and pencil the eyebrows. These are considered essential characteristics of beauty. The practice of anointing, too, of which such frequent mention is made in the Holy Scriptures, prevails among all classes.

At domestic festivals and gatherings, the women of the house anoint their female guests, and even braid their hair, pencil their brows, and sprinkle them with costly perfumes, while barbers of their own sex, found in every hamlet, pare and trim their nails. On other occasions, they go the round of the village, bearing alternately lamps and empty basins, in which they receive oil for the Brahmin; and returning home, they are entertained with music, and the evening concludes with a religious ceremony.

Hindoo marriages are usually negotiated by a professional matchmaker, called a ghutuku, who is regularly trained for the office. The principal qualifications seem to consist of the arts of flattering and lying, as the chief object of a ghutuku, when engaged in bringing about a marriage, is to impose on both his employers. Sometimes he proposes a match himself, before the parents of the implicated parties have given the subject a thought; and the overture is rarely ill received. A girl, if born of wealthy

parents, is often married in infancy, but the ordinary age of a bride is eight, ten, or twelve years. After the ceremony has been performed, she continues to reside with her father for two or three years, during which time, as frequently happens, her betrothed husband may die, and in that case she is condemned to perpetual widowhood. At best, she may never be claimed by her husband, or be allowed to remain under the paternal roof; and, indeed, a koolenu lady never leaves the house of her father.

Three days before the nuptials, the bride is anointed, and her female relations present her with a small box of dye, used for tinging the eyes, which she retains in her hand, day and night, till the ceremony is completed. The evening before the marriage she is visited by the bridegroom, who sets out from the house of his father in a palanquin, preceded by coolies, bearing long rods, often of massive silver; and surrounded by attendants, who ventilate the luxurious vehicle with a fan, made of the tail of a Tartar cow. Flags and music follow, with

open carriages, containing dancing-girls and singers ; and fireworks are discharged, while attendants illuminate the street with links and flambeaux. As the procession approaches the abode of the bride's father, it is met by her family, who, with joyous shouts, conduct the bridegroom into the house, where he is stripped of his ordinary attire, and dressed in sumptuous clothes, adorned for the occasion. The bride, who has been waiting in an inner room, is then brought forth, and the old garments of the bridegroom are thrown over her own, when they both stand up on stools, opposite to each other, and the bridegroom is permitted to look for the first time at the face of his bride. This is the prelude to several childish ceremonies, after which the officiating Brahmin, amidst the profound silence of the company, holds the hand of the bridegroom over a pan of water, and places on it the hand of the bride, linking them together with a wreath of flowers. At the same time, the father of the bride, exclaims — “ Of the family of A (or whatever the patro-



nymic may be), the great-grand-daughter of B, the grand-daughter of C, the daughter of D, wearing such and such clothes and jewels, I, F, give to thee G, as thy wife." The bridegroom replies—"I have received her." On this acknowledgment, the Brahmin, stepping before the others, ties the wedded pair together by their garments, and the ghutuku recites passages from the Mishra, thus concluding the solemnity.

The next day is devoted to the wedding feast. In the morning, both families, from the first break of dawn, alarm the neighbourhood with discordant noises, and a drum is beaten without intermission, summoning all their relatives and acquaintance. As the day advances, the bridegroom sends the bride a present of eatables, usually such delicacies as fish, birds, clarified butter and betel, and in some cases plantain and sweetmeats, which the lady receives through her friends, as a pledge of his affection. In the afternoon they have to submit to the operation of having their heads shaved, and night witnesses the grand procession, in which the

bridegroom, dressed in sumptuous apparel, is escorted to the nuptial banquet. This, as already described, forcibly illustrates the beautiful parables of Our Saviour and the description of the marriage at Cana of Galilee, the guests, like the governor of the Gospel feast, who cavilled at the miraculous supply of wine, being permitted to complain of whatever is set before them, and frequently stretching this privilege so far, that the banquet ends in a pitched battle.

·Notwithstanding the brutality with which Hindoo women are treated, and the iniquitous and debasing character of the marriage laws, in no country have the sex evinced more devoted affection for their husbands, or a higher sense of conjugal duty. The horrid rites of idolatry, the wicked devices of superstition, the monotony of a secluded life, and a long course of barbarous usage, have, in their case, failed to deface, however they might distort, the beautiful lineaments of the female character, and almost every action of their lives attests an abnegation of self. It

is indeed lamentable to reflect that in them the best feelings of nature, designed by the Divine Hand in beneficence and love, have been perverted to the worst purposes ; and, instead of proving a blessing to others, have operated as a curse on themselves.

The protecting arm of the East India Company, gradually extending its influence, has interposed with effect to ameliorate this system, and the wholesale slaughter of female infants has now received a severe check, while the revolting custom of suttee, though still practised in the native kingdoms, is altogether forbidden in British India. This is one of the most diabolical inventions of the Brahmins, and exhibits fanaticism in its most shocking phase. The stricken and desolate widow, often in the flower of her youth, and the first blush of her beauty, is the self-devoted victim of the sacrifice—blindly condemning herself to a dreadful and lingering death. The Brahmin seizes the moment of her distraction, when grief and superstition show everything in the darkest colours, to incite her to share the

funeral pile of her husband, and she perishes in the flames which consume his corpse. To add, if possible, to the horror of the spectacle, the hand that kindles the fire must be her own son's.

Captain Kemp, an Officer in the service of the Company, describes a touching instance of suttee, of which he was an eye-witness, and which occurred at Gondui-paru, about twenty miles from Calcutta, in March, 1813. In this case, the victim, who was the widow of a young Hindoo artificer, and only in her sixteenth year, was instigated to bury herself alive with the decaying corpse, and all the entreaties of the European residents could not shake her purpose. Her mother was humanely urged to interpose; but so completely were the feelings of nature silenced by the voice of superstition, that she resigned herself, without an effort, to the revolting sacrifice, exclaiming that it was her daughter's own choice, and that she was determined to follow the spirit of her husband. Next morning, the corpse was conveyed on a bier to the bank of the

... .. sacred river, where a circular grave, fifteen feet in circumference, and six in depth, was prepared for its reception. The dead man was placed in the bottom of the grave in a sitting posture; and the young widow, with the impress of girlhood still fresh on her face, her eyes beaming with enthusiasm, her features glowing with supernatural light, stepped from among her friends, and walked slowly round the pit, uttering a wild cry of "Huree-bul, Huree-bul." The words were caught up by the crowd, who repeated them in the same tone, while the infatuated woman proceeded seven times round the sepulchre, and then, amidst breathless silence, descended into it, sitting down behind the corpse, with her face towards the dead man's back, her left arm entwined round his neck, and her head reclining on his shoulder. Her right hand was raised in the air, over her head, with the forefinger erect, and moving in a circle, which it continued to do while the grave was being filled up, and the earth rammed deliberately round the living and the dead. Her body,

up to the chin, was already entombed, but her raised face continued visible, and beamed with the same rapt look, the same unearthly decision. But the splashing earth rose higher and higher; the face disappeared; the rounded arm was covered; and one last look, as the sickening spectator turned horror-stricken from the spot, showed *that the point of the finger was still erect, and still turning round!*

## VIII.

## THE MONGOLIAN FAMILY.

CHINA, Tartary, Thibet, and Japan, all countries equally averse to intercourse with foreigners, are the principal seats of a large tribe of the human family, classed together as Mongols. They have peopled the greater part of Asia from a very remote age, and hence claim precedence over the ancient nations of Europe.

The most important of these states is China, a vast empire, occupied by a race in every respect unique, and numbering nearly four hundred millions of souls. China Proper, or the Central Kingdom, called Chang-kwi, was known to the ancients, and

its inhabitants are mentioned by Ptolemy, under the name of the Sinæ. This province contains the capital, Pekin, which covers within the walls an area of twelve miles, but is not remarkable for architectural beauty. Its principal structure is the royal palace, said to be a mile in length, and three-quarters of a mile in breadth, but the only attractive feature in this huge pile seems to be its roof, which is composed of yellow tiles, highly glazed, and thus, when they reflect the sunbeams, appearing like a mass of gold. Extensive gardens surround the imperial residence, and an artificial lake, studded with rock-girt islets, pours a number of little rivulets through the ground, which Chinese art has furnished with all the diversities of hill and dale, grove, cascade, and fountain. The city is divided into two towns, Chinese and Tartar, but the streets in both are narrow, and the principal thoroughfares, besides being densely thronged, are encumbered with itinerant stalls, and with hawkers and traders of all kinds, rendering progress a difficult



feat. Mr. Elwes, in his highly interesting work, *A Sketcher's Tour Round the World*, gives a ludicrous description of the streets of Canton, which will equally apply to those of Peking, where Mr. Barrow saw booths standing in the middle of the road, while great officers of state, attended by long trains of servants, with flags and streamers, on their way to the imperial palace, added to the confusion of the scene. The shops, which are open in front, are gaily decorated with flags and ribbons, with scraps of paper bearing some motto or proverb, and with all the radiant colours of the Chinese easel.

Nankin, the ancient capital of the empire, is of greater extent than Peking, but has now fallen into decay. The province, however, retains in its broken diadem the gem of Su-cheu, so famous in Chinese story, and which has given rise to the proverb of "Paradise is in heaven, but Su-cheu on earth." This beautiful city is the favourite residence of the Chinese noblesse, and is celebrated, before all the other cities of the

empire, for its rich brocades, its jugglers, dancers, and pretty women. Thither the daughters of the chief mandarins are sent, as to a university, to be instructed in the arts of politeness, the science of etiquette, and the less important accomplishments of music and dancing; and it is generally acknowledged, that the women of Su-cheu are as distinguished for their refined manners as they are for their beauty.

The Chinese, who consider themselves the oldest people of the earth, carry back their chronicles for some thirty thousand years; but Sir William Jones could not trace them higher than the Cheu dynasty, which was contemporary with the later Judges of Israel, about 1100 years before Christ. Their form of government, however, which retains the patriarchal character of the earliest times, fully establishes the antiquity of their origin, and it is probable that these eccentric descendants of Shem were the first settlers in the far East.

The Chinese appear to have been but

little disturbed by foreigners till the reign of Zenghis Khan, the great Tartar chief, who, sweeping down like an avalanche from the vast mountain plateaux of central Asia, extended his sanguinary sway over the whole Eastern world. Even Europe trembled at the name of the Mongol conqueror, and felt the presence of his savage hordes. China, with an energy worthy of her ancient traditions, stoutly opposed his progress, but in the end, was subjugated by his grandson, Khan-Khoubilai, who founded the Tartar dynasty of the Youen. This, after existing a century, was overthrown, in the feeble reign of Chun-Ti, by Tchou-Youen-Tchang, the son of a labourer; and from this successful rebel sprung the celebrated dynasty of the Ming, which in 1368 ascended the imperial throne under the name of Houng-wou. The Ming revolution led to the expulsion of the Tartars, or, rather, to their extermination, as every Tartar found within the bounds of the empire was put to death; but towards the commencement of the seventeenth century, the powerful nation

of the Mantchous, fired by the example of their ancestors, again burst into China, and speedily reduced it to subjection. Their success consigned the throne of China to the dynasty of Ta-ts'hing, which still retains the precarious inheritance, though the formidable movement now on foot, combining the two forces of nationality and fanaticism, will probably ere long wrest the now feeble sceptre from its grasp.

The Tartars, in whom warlike propensities are inherent, have, indeed, been the hereditary enemies of the empire from time immemorial; but, in the early ages, they were kept in check by the Great Wall, erected by the Emperor Thsiu-Chi-Koang-Ti, about 200 years before Christ. This renowned fortification is undoubtedly, in point of extent, the greatest work ever executed by man, and incloses the whole country from the westernmost point of Chau-kioi to the Eastern Sea. But, viewed as a defence, the character usually ascribed to it is wholly undeserved; and Huc, who crossed the vaunted bulwark at fifteen different points,

travelling for days together in a parallel line, describes it as being generally no more than a low wall, often formed entirely of earth. To the fearful engines of modern warfare, such a barrier could oppose no obstacle, and European soldiers would only regard it with contempt.

As the temperament and habits of a people are always deeply influenced by the national religion, it hardly excites surprise, after a careful study of the Chinese character, to find that the religious element is very lightly esteemed by the flowery nation. I was informed by Mr. Elwes, whose observant eye is accustomed to look deeper than the surface, that the majority of the educated Chinese are atheists; and though there are three authorised religious sects, Dr. Morrison considers that they are tolerated rather than supported by the imperial government. The ancient religion was a gross idolatry, stained with the most revolting rites; but this was very early abrogated by Confucius, and a pure theism established on its ruined and deserted altars.

The heathen Apostle, who made his appearance about 600 years before the Christian era, was the author of the Shu-king, a collection of Sacred Odes, probably suggested by the Old Testament, since they teach, what was then only known to the Jews, that there is but one God, and that He is eternal, omnipresent, and omniscient, the supreme ruler of the world, and the dispenser both of rewards and punishments. The sky was said to be the visible emblem of this beneficent Being, and this was to be worshipped, with humble prayers and offerings, on the tops of mountains—a practice evidently borrowed from the prevailing corruptions of the Jews. But Mongolian superstition soon interpolated this creed with the deification of the elements, and a cumbrous machinery of genii and spirits, which obscured its original features, and threw a darker veil over the majesty of the Deity. The eloquence of the great reformer, Lantse, B.C. 550, and of the illustrious Kong-fu-tu, who flourished about a century later, failed to check the reviving spirit of idolatry, and it

has since struck its roots deeper and deeper through successive ages, though from the reign of Ming-ti, A.D. 63, it has had to contend with the more subtle juggleries of Buddhism.

Buddhism, which prevails over a great part of China, Tartary, Hindostan, and the Indian Archipelago, has its root in Thibet. The appellation is derived from Buddha, the Deity, who, according to this creed, is perpetually incarnate, reappearing in a succession of bodies, so that on the demise of one, he is presently discovered in another. The religious orders generally seclude themselves in convents, or lamaseries, each of which has its own living Buddha, but these are all subject to the chief deity, called the Tale-Lama, who resides at Lha-Ssa, the capital, and is invested with the supreme authority, spiritual and temporal. Buddhism inculcates the practice of many of the moral virtues, and, above all, humanity to the whole animal creation, a natural provision in a religion which, as an explanation of the constant reappearance of Buddha, has for its

basis the Pythagorean doctrine of the transmigration of souls. When a Tale-Lama dies, the hierarchy expect his return in every new-born infant, and he is sought for by certain marks, in a manner that forcibly calls to mind the inquisitions of the Egyptian priests for the Apis. The minor Buddhas, however, are occasionally required to support their divine pretensions by a miracle, and one of their favourite tricks is to cut open their abdomen, in the presence of a large assemblage of adorers, and then, by a touch of the finger, heal it up again. But such juggleries, though they may impose on the ignorant and the credulous, excite no surprise in those who are acquainted with the clever performances of Chinese conjurors, which may be seen in any of the places of public resort, and far surpass the pseudo miracles ascribed to Buddha.

The extraordinary figured tree, called the Tree of the Ten Thousand Images, which grows in the sacred garden of the far-famed Lamasery of Kounbourn, is the one inscrutable marvel of Buddhism. Huc, who visited



the spot, gives a minute description of this floral prodigy, which he examined with care ; but the statement of the reverend traveller must be received with caution, as he evinces, in all matters of a superstitious cast, a strange eagerness of belief. “ Upon entering the inclosure of the temple,” he says, “ we were able to examine at leisure this marvellous tree, some of the branches of which already appeared above the wall. Our eyes were first directed with earnest curiosity to the leaves, and we were struck with absolute consternation at finding that, in point of fact, there were upon each of the leaves well-formed Thibetan characters, all of a green colour, some darker, some lighter than the leaf itself. The characters all appeared to be portions of the leaf, equally with its veins and nerves ; the position was not the same in all ; and the younger leaves represented the characters in a partial state of formation. The bark of the tree, and its branches, which resemble those of the plane tree, are also covered with these characters. When you remove a piece of the bark, the

young bark beneath represents the characters in a germinating state, and they are often different from those they replace." Such is the wonderful tree of Kounbourn, which has for many ages been an object of veneration to the superstitious, and has even been honoured with a visit from a Chinese Emperor, the devout Khang-Hi, who, with the liberality natural to a royal pilgrim, covered it over with a dome of silver, in token of his devotion to Buddha.

Buddhism exercises a very pernicious influence on the social and moral position of woman; but this effect is especially apparent in Thibet, where, in obedience to long-established custom, nearly half the male population assume the idle functions and the vows of the priesthood. Such a practice, continued through every generation, necessarily leads to a depreciation of the ties of marriage, which, both in Thibet and China, are of the loosest kind, and the married women of these countries are completely at the mercy of their insensate husbands.

The antiquated and unwieldy laws of

China afford the sex but little protection, though they visit its derelictions, and even its weaknesses, with unpitying severity. A wife, from the first day of her marriage, is bound in the most degrading servitude; and, among the lower orders, it is she who undertakes the difficult and laborious work, while the lighter duties are assigned to the husband. In rural districts, women fulfil the most arduous employments of agriculture, toiling all the day in the field, while men look idly on; and the patient and industrious wife, often when harassed by the cares of maternity, drives the cumbrous plough, leaving to her husband the easy task of sowing the ground. The women of the middle and higher classes are condemned to a seclusion tantamount to imprisonment. They occupy distinct sets of apartments, are shut up from all society, and are not even permitted—what indeed would be no great privilege—to take their meals with their husbands. The only place they are suffered to visit is the temple, to which they are conveyed at stated times, in a

covered chair, or a wheelbarrow, jealously enveloped with curtains. As everything is done from their infancy to suppress the nobler emotions of nature—as they receive no intellectual culture, and their only education consists of a few useless accomplishments—they pass their existence in endless ennui, so uninfluenced by all the sensations of life that they must eagerly welcome death. The daughters of the chief mandarins learn nothing but dancing and music; and, in the misery of their solitude, seek relief in smoking, or in the deadly fumes of opium. Ladies of inferior rank, whom it is not considered so necessary to train in idleness, are taught embroidery and painting; and to the cunning hands of these fair *artistes* we owe the painted gauzes, fans, and fire-screens of China, the brilliant and exquisite colouring of which is so universally admired. The inhuman custom of crippling the feet of Chinese ladies is well known; but, as it is not referred to by Marco Polo, we may reasonably set it down, with many other barbarisms, as an invention of comparatively

modern times. The feet are seized almost at the moment of birth, and the heel and all the toes, with the exception of the large ones, are compressed by hoops into the shape of an inverted cone, the foot being reduced to the size of a doll's, not exceeding four inches in length, and in breadth seldom more than two. Hence Chinese ladies are unable to walk any distance; and the more they hobble in their gait, the more courtly and graceful they are thought. Long fingernails are also considered a distinguishing characteristic of noble dames, and some of the ladies of the court, who are looked upon as the very pink of fashion, cultivate this grace with such success, that their nails are said to extend twelve inches beyond the tips of their fingers. The practice of crippling the feet is not followed in the province of Kiang-si; and as the women of that district are able to move freely about, they are very serviceable in field work, for which they have acquired such a reputation that farmers usually purchase their wives in Kiang-si.

The wives of the Emperors, and the prin-

cesses of the blood royal, who form a community of themselves, are not always condemned to the same rigorous seclusion which mantles the wretched families of the mandarins, and, in the huge palace of the great Khan, these favoured ladies exchange visits, attend fêtes and parties, and discuss scandal over their tea. For the princesses, however, this is but a short respite, as on attaining a marriageable age, they are condemned to wed some hideous Mongol chief, and are hurried off to the gloomy steppes and deserts of Tartary. Here they sigh for the happy and beautiful gardens of Peking, where they passed the years of their youth ; and at one time, they returned so frequently to the capital, in search of its innocent gaieties, that it was found necessary to issue a severe edict, by which it was decreed that they should only make their appearance at court once in ten years.

The matrimonial alliances with Tartar chiefs have prevailed from the time of the Emperor Kaoti, when the Tanjous, or Huns, after a succession of sanguinary inroads,

exacted from the Chinese ruler, as the first condition of peace, an annual tribute of the fairest of his daughters. At that ancient date, a royal Sappho, looking back at her early years in the flowery land, bewails, in pathetic verses, the miserable fate to which she had thus been doomed, and contrasts the rugged life of her Tartar tent, where she lives on raw flesh and sour milk, exposed to all the caprices of a brutal husband, with the pleasures of her native Peking, the luxuries of the imperial palace, and the fond caresses of her indulgent parents.

Marriage is obligatory in China, and is regulated by specific laws. The first spouse, who receives the title of "Mother of the House," and enjoys privileges not extended to the other wives, is chosen by the parents of the bridegroom, who arrange the union with those of the lady, without reference to the feelings or the wishes of the young people. The bride is obtained by purchase, and should there be competitors for her hand, she is awarded to the highest bidder. All, however, engage in the contest without

any knowledge of the particular attractions of the lady, whose charms are never disclosed till she reaches the residence of her intended; but the intrepid speculator, if dissatisfied with his bargain, may then return her to her parents, and dissolve the contract, provided he is content to forfeit the purchase-money. On the terms being arranged, the bride is locked up in a latticed chair or wheelbarrow, the key of which is handed over to the bridegroom, who, accompanied by his parents and friends, conveys the precious deposit to his house, when the casket is opened, and the living gem displayed. The marriage ceremony is simple and brief. All the preliminaries settled, the happy pair, in presence of their family and friends, go through the performance of eating together, and exchange cups, when they rise from their seats, and prostrating themselves before their parents, the union is as indissoluble and complete as Chinese ingenuity can make it. The public betrothal is usually followed by an entertainment, varying in splendour with the means and



disposition of the two families, and the social rank of the bridegroom. A month afterwards, the parents of the bride, who have been only too glad to get her off their hands, honour her with a visit of ceremony, and she is then permitted herself to pay a similar compliment to her near relations.

Although the privilege enjoyed by a Chinese of rejecting his purchased bride if her attractions do not equal his expectations, may be invidious and vexatious, it must be confessed that the popular estimate of beauty is not an extravagant one, or one difficult to be met. A snub nose, thick lips, small dark eyes carefully bereft of every lash, and jet black tresses, form the principal beauties of the face; and corpulence, though not indispensable, gives an irresistible grace to the figure. Deformed feet, and finger nails longer than talons, rendering the hands perfectly useless, complete the catalogue of charms, which, when they are all possessed by one person, go far to constitute a Chinese Venus.

A man is permitted to have as many wives

as he can purchase; and as women of the humbler classes are very industrious, and undertake every employment, they do not entail a heavy expense for their maintenance. The husband is authorized to chastise his wife with a bamboo; but the thickness of the stick, as well as the exact number of blows for each offence, and the circumstances under which they may and may not be administered, are carefully adjusted by law, and a blow more or less than the legitimate number will expose the husband to the avenging lash of the magistrate. Every incident of domestic life and every word spoken being regulated by etiquette, it is very easy to transgress, and the inexorable law insists that no transgression shall be passed over. For voluntary desertion of her family, to which a woman may be driven by unremitted ill-usage, the offender, on her apprehension, is reduced to the condition of a slave, and such she virtually becomes. But a man may commit the same act with impunity, though an absence of more than three years secures

to his wife, on appealing to a magistrate, the privilege of contracting another alliance. Wives are very frequently deserted by their capricious consorts; and they may be divorced, if such is the wish of the husband, for the most trivial causes, such as loquacity, pilfering, a fretful or jealous temper, or even for being afflicted with disease. Thus, after a woman has given her youth, health, strength, and the flower of her life to some despicable tyrant; and perhaps helped to maintain him in idleness by her labour and industry, she may be cast off, in the dreary time of sickness or age, to perish of want—a death by no means uncommon in China, where the poor sometimes lie down in the public road to pay the last sad debt of nature.

The dress of Chinese women exhibits such a degree of taste as might naturally be expected from their neglected education. Among the lower classes, it is vulgar and tawdry, evincing neither fertility of resource nor harmony of colour. A straw hat, stuck with gaudy flowers, completely hides the

well-dyed hair, which is turned in a top-knot over the head, and secured by a bodkin, while a strip of black velvet falls in front to the nose. Trousers of pink or yellow meet a blue cotton frock, and fit close and tight to the calf of the leg, so as to give due prominence to the overgrown ankle, the dimensions of which, though requiring no exaggeration, are magnified by rolls of bandage, of various colours, and besprinkled with beads and spangles, to attract and rivet the fascinated eye. Feet small as a doll's are encased in tinselled and embroidered shoes, which it has taxed the utmost ingenuity of the owner to render sufficiently ornamental, and nothing is needed but the limping gait to produce an irresistible effect. The dress of ladies differs only in the material, which is often of the most costly description; and gold and jewels, very profusely used, take the place of spangles and tinsel. When all this decoration is heightened by the blandishments of the toilet, such as tinging the teeth with betel and tobacco, which gives them a beau-

tiful green and yellow appearance, and other similar devices, it will readily be acknowledged that a Chinese lady in full costume is calculated to produce a decided impression in a crowd.

The Tartar standard of beauty is somewhat different from that established in the celestial empire. A genuine Mongol belle, living on the desolate steppes of the Ortons, in a village of scattered and ragged tents, plumes herself on her olive complexion, black hair, and small black eyes, the latter elliptical in shape, forming an acute angle with the ridge of the nose, and inclined obliquely from the temples. Her head has been carefully flattened; her forehead is wide, her chin peaked, and she rejoices in a flat nose, and ears that a jack-ass might envy. A broad, square, full figure, all bone and muscle, is preferred to the embonpoint of the Chinese, and, indeed, is absolutely required by a life of hardship and labour, in an ungenial, variable, and trying climate.

Tartars are proverbial for their skill in

horsemanship ; and a Tartar girl, from mere instinct—for it forms no part of her vocations—is as much at home on horseback as the best man in her tribe. There is no feat of equitation that she will scruple to perform ; and a steed which would have daunted Mazeppa—a Bucephalus which Alexander might have hesitated to mount—wild, fiery, swift as the wind, is to her but an ordinary palfrey, and carries her safely over arid desert and mountain steep, without occasioning a moment's uneasiness.

Tartar women, while thus rough and ready, do not neglect those employments which are the natural province of the sex—the domestic duties, the preparation of their humble meals, and the use of the needle, in which, indeed, they are especially dexterous. With very rude implements they make all the wearing apparel of the men, as well as their own ; and at the same time, excel in the more delicate arts of embroidery and colouring. Their ingenious designs exhibit a natural taste for the beautiful, wholly irreconcilable with their actual social condition,

and proving that, whatever other effects may ensue, the most disadvantageous circumstances cannot always overrule the rooted innate refinement of the female mind.

The Tartars differ from other Eastern nations in allowing women a certain liberty of action; and their wives and daughters, instead of being secluded in close apartments, or pent-up tents, surrounded by the usual guards of such abodes, move freely about, visiting from tent to tent, and mingling even in the society of the other sex. But the laws relating to marriage are as invidious and unjust as those of China. Divorce, an institution so susceptible of abuse, is even more easy, and a man can cast off his wives at pleasure, without so much as alleging a reason. Hence the ties elsewhere esteemed the most endearing in nature are in Tartary held but lightly, and rent without scruple or compunction.

The wife, as in China, is obtained by purchase; a deed being drawn up between the two contracting parties, in which the father of the bridegroom, acting in his behalf,

agrees to present the friends of the lady with a certain number of sheep and horses, and, what is more to the point, a liberal donation of brandy, in exchange for their fair kinswoman. This covenant being duly concluded, the fact is solemnly announced to the bride's family, who, in the fulness of their joy, offer up a savoury sheep's-head to the household Buddha, and the lady's father quaffs a goblet of sour milk, not to the health of the plighted couple, but as a crowning formality, essential to the legalization of the union. The cup, indeed, contains a piece of money, dropped into it by the father of the bridegroom; and this is quietly pocketed by the other parent, who is thus said to complete and ratify the bargain.

The ceremonies of the nuptial day recal those in vogue among the wild nomadic tribes of Persia. There is the same procession of equestrians to the tent of the bride's father, but it is not accompanied by the apathetic bridegroom. The latter, who perhaps has never seen the lady's face, contents himself with sending a party of his



relatives to escort her home, and patiently awaits her arrival. On reaching the tent of her father, his friends are met by those of the bride, who surround the tent, and oppose their entrance. But, after a brief struggle, the bridal party force their way in, seize the bride, who is eager to depart, and sweeping in a circle round the dwelling of her father, triumphantly carry her off to that of her future husband. Here, in presence of the two families, and the assembled neighbours, who flock in uninvited, she makes an obeisance to her new kindred, to the bridegroom, and the household hearth; and all are then entertained with a feast, protracted over seven or eight days, and for which the bridegroom's father is recompensed by sumptuous donations from his kindred and connexions.

In Thibet, the grand centre of Buddhist influences, on which the code of the Mongolian deserts is founded, women are in much the same position as in Tartary. They enjoy an equal degree of freedom, and are permitted to associate openly with men. The law, however, in granting this liberty,

requires that they shall make themselves as ugly as possible before they appear in public ; and whenever they present themselves in the streets, their faces must be encased in a thick, spotted varnish, which effectually screens every charm. This is the veil of the Thibetan lady, and to neglect such an essential part of her toilet, and show her face in its natural aspect, would be not only a violation of the law, but would subject the offender to arrest and punishment. The Thibetan women, however, groan under the odious usage, and sometimes run every risk to indulge the beaux with a glimpse of their faces. Like their Tartar neighbours, they possess considerable taste, and are particularly skilful in painting. Their dress, though it differs but little from that of the men, is becoming, and admits of much variation in point of colour. The hair is worn long, parted in the centre of the head, and thrown in two wavy tresses over the shoulders. It is generally adorned with a band of pearls, or, if such a costly decoration is not to be had, by a string of beads ; and the bonnet of the

European dame is represented by a cap of red cloth, worn rather jantily on the head. Altogether their appearance is such as almost to afford the Lamas an excuse, if one were demanded, for insisting that they should disguise and disfigure their faces.

The Thibetan women are very industrious, and, in addition to the ordinary duties of the sex, carry on all the traffic and petty commerce of the country. They convey their commodities to market over rugged and impracticable roads, without assistance from the men, and visit distant villages as hawkers and pedlars, displaying their wares at every house. They are naturally gay, courteous, and, of course, gentle and affectionate, and require only the beneficent influence of Christianity, and of mild and just laws, to raise them to a high standard of moral excellence.

A large branch of the Mongolian family is located in Japan, which, indeed, may compare with China in density of population; and Jeddo, the capital, is said to contain more than ten millions of inha-

bitants. This vast empire, rising in the midst of the Indian Ocean, at a point constantly approached by the argosies of our merchants, is hermetically sealed to the rest of mankind, though the American government has recently received a promise that, after a certain time, its citizens shall be admitted to a limited intercourse. The measure of exclusion was first adopted in consequence of the intrigues of the Jesuits, who, after being hospitably received and entertained by the Emperor, stirred up their adherents in the islands to revolt, and hence led to very serious disorders. On the suppression of the insurrection, Christianity, to which all the mischief was attributed, fell under a ban, and it was pronounced a capital offence to hold any intercourse with foreigners. A slight exception was made in favour of the Dutch, who are suffered, under great restrictions, to send two ships every year to the principal island, to supply the court and nobility with articles of European luxury.

Thus Japan, with its mountains and

forests, its rich and teeming valleys, its bustling, crowded cities, is to its inhabitants an absolute prison, and to the world a land unknown—in it, but not of it. Still Europeans, thrown by shipwreck or other accidents on its inhospitable shores, have penetrated the cordon so jealously established, and acquired some knowledge of the government and people.

The sovereign power is vested in two Emperors, one of whom is the supreme temporal authority, and bears the title of Kumbo-Sana, while the other, called the Kiu-Rey, devotes himself to spiritual affairs, and presides over the idolatrous religion of the country. Nominally, indeed, he is entitled to admonish, or even to restrain, the more potent lay Emperor, should he overstep the bounds of justice or decorum; but his influence, when he ventures to exercise it, has but little real effect, and the strong arm of his temporal brother always prevails. The nobles and dignitaries, not a few of whom govern separate principalities with the attributes and prerogatives of

kings, are subject to the temporal Emperor, and are occasionally obliged to appear at his court, when they present themselves with thousands of attendants, and surrounded by all the insignia and all the splendour of royalty.

As might be imagined from the character of the government, woman plays no part in the history of Japan, though, allowing for Oriental usages, she is treated, on the whole, with tolerable leniency. She occupies a better position in the family, from not entailing any charge at her marriage, as a bride receives no dowry, but, on the contrary, is presented by her husband with a handsome donation, which is invariably appropriated by her father. In Japan, therefore, it is considered more fortunate to have daughters than sons, as the former ultimately prove a very profitable investment.

On the birth of a son, the event is commemorated by planting a tree, which, if the little stranger lives, is carefully tended till the day of his marriage, when it is cut

down, and furnishes material for a chest, designed expressly to hold the wardrobe of the newly-wedded couple. The marriage, as in China and Tartary, is an affair between the parents, and the wishes of the young people themselves are never consulted. The bride is usually in her fifteenth year, but maturity being early developed, wedlock may be contracted at a still younger age, and the mother is often a child herself. Marriage is a religious ceremony, and is celebrated with great pomp, and many forms, in a public temple, in presence of the priests and idols, and the friends and kindred of both families. The priest blackens the pearly teeth of the bride, using for this purpose the same indelible lacquer applied to coal-scuttles, and other similar japan ware ; and this serves, from that time to her death, to notify, like the wedding ring of Europe, that she has entered the married state.

A man's wives all live together in one household. The first wife, however, enjoys a superior rank, and exercises the greatest authority, the others being, to a certain extent, subject to her control.

Ladies of rank live in strict seclusion, and are hardly permitted even to stir from their apartments, though on special occasions, they appear, under the sacred protection of the veil, in public thoroughfares, closely attended by their jealous and wary husbands. Women of the humbler classes present themselves in the streets unveiled, but they are not allowed to speak to a man, unless their fastidious spouse, who perhaps has half-a-dozen other wives under lock and key at home, is present.

The costume of the Japanese has a characteristic common to the whole Mongolian race, inasmuch as the dress of the woman assimilates closely to that of the man. It is very simple, consisting solely of a loose dressing-gown, called a *chiramon*, worn over long wide trousers, and fastened at the waist by a band. Ladies in affluent circumstances wear as many as twenty of these garments at once, one over the other, and if they become too warm, deliberately throw a gown or two off, and let it hang down over the girdle, gradually stripping them-



selves of their redundant wardrobe, much in the same manner as the clown at Astley's, in his famous ride to Brentford. The hair of the Japanese women, whether rich or poor, is their most effective ornament. It is glossy and luxuriant, and is tastefully adorned with flowers and ribbons, adding materially to their charms.

In Japan, China, Tartary, and Thibet, where the Mongolian family has so long been settled, women, and even men, have for centuries remained in the same condition, bound, cramped, stationary. We are about to open a new page in their history and their destiny; but if it is to enregister such incidents as have hitherto marked the track of the Caucasian, better it were for themselves—for the honour of Christianity and of civilization—that that yet hidden page were never turned. Let us hope for a happier and brighter result.

## IX.

## GREECE.

GREECE is a land endeared to our sympathies and sensibilities from the moment that they are first developed. The most ancient temple of the arts, the nursery of poetry and philosophy, and the earliest home of freedom, it is associated with every sentiment that can charm the eye, animate the breast, or engage the understanding. No excellence seems too great to attribute to her children ; and her familiar history, a household book for all time, claims ready belief for its most marvellous episodes. We can recall the fabled statue of Pygmalion, as it stood before his own rapt eyes, swelling with the first gentle tide of life and motion : we can

see the cold marble take form and expression from the Promethean chisel of Phidias ; we can imagine, though not realise, the exquisite grace and matchless symmetry of the Delphian Apollo. The mind still responds to the thrilling cadences of Homer, fires at the eloquence of Demosthenes, and lingers, a wondering pupil, at the charmed feet of Aristotle. We bleed with Leonidas at the pass of Thermopylæ ; we read with throbbing hearts the glorious story of Marathon : we kindle at the great names of Alcibiades, Themistocles, Pericles, and Cimon. Is it possible, then, that even barbarism can have trodden down the hallowed groves of the Academy, where, under the shadow of the classic portico, the immortal Plato taught, and crowds listened to the almost inspired lips of Socrates ? The circus, the theatre, and the temple, the Areopagus and the Agora, have equally paid the debt of time ; but mighty vestiges attest their ancient grandeur, and Greece is still holy ground to the poet, the antiquary, the sculptor, and the patriot.

Through these associations and these illusions we must grope our way to the real character and actual social condition of this remarkable people. The picture, alas ! alters as we near it, and reveals the usual fallible touches of human infirmity. The favoured children of the gods, whom history has enshrined for our idolatry, were indeed but indifferent beings ; their heroes were without generosity, their maidens without tenderness, and their matrons without virtue. It was they who condemned and destroyed Miltiades, who banished the just Aristides, and who put Socrates to death. They it was who, jealous of their own freedom, enslaved the miserable Helots, and annually compelled those helpless serfs to mangle and slaughter each other, from a craven fear of their growing numbers. And finally, with all their poetry, refinement, and boasted chivalry, they remained to the last wholly unconscious of the true characteristics and innate natural susceptibilities of woman.

This renowned nation sprang from various

tribes of robbers and pirates, who, in remote times, fixed their haunts in the masked harbours of the *Ægean*; and Thucydides, with manly candour, mentions that, even in an age comparatively enlightened, the Greeks considered piracy an honourable calling. Such it was undoubtedly esteemed in the days of Homer, who—and not Herodotus—was the father, or rather the patriarch of history, as well as of poetry, and who flourished about 850 years before Christ. At this time the Greeks are represented as a family of tribes, united by the ties of a common origin and a common language, though the latter, as a natural consequence of their subdivision, was corrupted by different dialects. The government was vested in the several chiefs, who, however, were subject, in all important points, to the superior authority of the *Basileus*, or King—a dignity conferred by their suffrages on the warrior most distinguished for wisdom, virtue, undaunted courage, and personal strength. This position was an object of ambition to the greatest heroes, though the

royal diadem imposed only additional cares, and did not relieve its possessor or his family from the humblest employments. Paris, a prince of the blood royal of Troy, assisted in the erection of his own palace ; and Ulysses publicly made it a boast that he was an admirable ploughman. The King, however, usually possessed great treasures, and was allotted the largest share of the spoil during war, and, what he was envied more, the most beautiful female captive.

General dissoluteness of manners is the most prominent characteristic of the Homeric era ; and woman, instead of being an instrument of civilization, is made the active agent of social corruption. The very subject of the Iliad shows, in a striking light, how little value was placed by the ancients on the precious influence of female virtue. Helen, the heroine of the immortal epic, was not more distinguished for her personal beauty, though it is described as divine, than for her frailty and perfidy. Even in the tender period of childhood, her dawning

charms attracted the eye of violence, and the lovely princess was only in her tenth year, when she became the prey of Theseus. Recovered by the prowess of her brothers, her hand was sought by all the princes of Greece, who, for this purpose, repaired in a body to the splendid court of her father—Tyndarus, King of Sparta. The monarch, bewildered by so many suitors, was relieved from the perplexity their rivalry occasioned by the advice of Ulysses; and the favour of Helen herself secured the prize for Menelaus. Yet, in a few years, the young Queen, surrounded by every enjoyment that affection could prompt, or wealth and power command, abandoned the husband of her choice, and her infant children, to elope with a stranger, who, in the guise of a friend and a guest, outraged at once the laws of hospitality and of nature.

Such was the degraded character for whom the infatuated Trojans took up arms, and whom the princesses of Troy, far from repudiating, openly received as a sister. Nor was it esteemed discreditable to Helen

that, while she was thus sheltered and protected in Troy, she maintained a clandestine correspondence with the leaders of Greece, in which she divulged, without scruple or remorse, the military plans of her defenders. On the death of Paris, she married his brother Deiphobus, and finally betrayed that prince, with whom she had pretended to be enamoured, to the Greeks, sealing her treachery with his blood.

The fate of Helen involved a termination not unsuitable to so profligate a career, Retiring to Rhodes, she fell a victim to the unscrupulous vengeance of another woman, Polyxa, widow of Tlepolemus, who, discovering her retreat, caused her to be seized by her female slaves disguised as furies, and, to these pitiless wretches, a tree furnished a gibbet for the fairest of her sex. What was the Greek estimate of virtue may be inferred from the fact, that, after her death, the frail Helen was awarded divine honours, and she who in life had been weaker than a woman, in the grave was exalted into a goddess.



Sappho is a more signal, because a more brilliant, example of the corruption of the female character among the early Greeks; and fragments of her own deathless lyrics survive to attest her depravity. To incomparable beauty, this gifted woman added every rare endowment of the mind, and some of the most engaging qualities of the heart. For her immortal lays, she received from her countrymen, in a later age, the flattering appellation of the Tenth Muse, and their plaudits have been approved by the candid judgment of posterity. But while we are struck by the fire of her words, and the melting tenderness of her melodious notes—while we kindle at the glow of her genius and her imagination, we turn in disgust from her indelicacy, her levity, and her crimes. Painful it is to reflect, what the ancients have not sought to disguise, that these were the characteristics, not of an individual, but of the whole female community—that they were held up for admiration, and for universal imitation, and were even stamped with the solemn approval of the gods.

Sappho, one of the earliest poets, is, at the same time, the first woman who is recorded to have died for love. Transported by her passion for Phaon, she became indifferent to her divine gifts, to the ties of nature, and to the pleasures of life, and, in a moment of frenzy, put an end to her own existence. To such a mind, even suicide must be made sublime, and the memorable spot which was the scene of her death is still pointed out to the voyager along the shores of Greece. It bears the significant name of "Sappho's Leap."

The religion of the Greeks was eminently calculated to induce and foster a corrupt system of morals, which, indeed, was but too consonant with the natural disposition of the people. Their mythology was essentially material, and the gods were represented with all the passions and all the infirmities of men. Newgate, peopled with the blackest criminals, could hardly have matched the Grecian pantheon; and women were taught to adore deities, whom men, had they possessed any of the higher or nobler impulses of humanity, should have blushed to name. Materiality

was carried to such an extent, that every passion, every sentiment, every emotion, almost every natural object, was physically embodied ; and anger, despair, sleep, woods and rivers, fountains, rocks, and whirlpools, were converted into divinities, and became the arbiters and ministers of fate.

The far-famed oracle of Delphi, shrined in the temple of Apollo, at the foot of Mount Parnassus, exercised a leading influence on the religious and social, and even on the political government of the Greeks. Delphi was supposed to be the centre of the earth, and the stately temple was erected over a hole, which, as the legend affirms, continually emitted a steam-like exhalation, infused with the prophetic breath of Apollo. The oracular responses were pronounced by a woman, who derived from her office the high name of Pythia ; and the prophecies, which soon acquired a world-wide reputation, and still remain among the puzzles of history, were originally delivered in verse, but on its being sarcastically observed that the god of poetry

was a very indifferent poet, prose, always closely mantled in a veil of mystery, was substituted. When required to discharge this function, Pythia, attended by a train of five priests, arrayed in sacerdotal vestments, dipped her head in the fountain of Castalis, on the rise of Mount Parnassus, and then, wreathing her brow with the sacred laurel, entered the gloomy subterraneous cavity of the temple, and seated herself on a three-legged stool, called a tripod, which was perforated beneath, and placed over the focus of the sulphurous vapour. Inspiration sometimes developed itself in a gentle manner, and the oracle was then uttered in accents soft as music; at others, the Pythia, as soon as she inhaled the vapour, was seized with convulsive throes, burst into wild cries and howlings, and pronounced the response, when questioned, in broken and frantic words, with difficulty taken down by the attendant priests. Plutarch mentions one occasion when the cries of Pythia were so piercing, and her throes so horrifying, that the priests fled in dismay from the temple,

and the miserable victim of superstition expired herself on the following day.

The oracle, as may be imagined, often drew its inspiration from other sources than the Castalian fountain, or the prophetic vapour; and Pythia, like Danæ, was vulnerable to a shower of gold. Originally the office was filled by beautiful maidens, still in the flower of youth; but Echebrates, a Thessalian, having attempted the abduction of one of these fair priestesses, none were afterwards advanced to the tripod till they had reached their fiftieth year. The Pythias were bound to a life of virtue, a rule not always followed by the Grecian priestesses, as the case of Hero, priestess of Sestus, sufficiently attests. Hero held up a beacon to her lover Leander, as he swam across the Hellespont to her feet, from the very turret of the temple, and from that spot she precipitated herself into the sea, when in the midst of a terrific storm, she saw the sturdy swimmer engulfed by the waves.

Such a religion as that of Greece necessarily weakened and perverted, but could

not wholly destroy, the beautiful moral influence of woman ; for the poetic temperament of the Greeks never failed to acknowledge and recognise an element so fruitful of passion and feeling. The poems which recite their early history, are chiefly interesting from their various female characters ; and conflicting sentiments, now of sympathy or pity, now of indignant wonder, throw a halo, as we read, round the immortal names of Penelope, Andromache, Helen, and Hecuba. Yet no consideration was shown for the weakness and tender instincts of the sex, which appeal so eloquently to man for protection. It was a common occurrence for the women of one tribe to be carried off by a ruthless foray from another, when they were reduced to slavery, without regard to rank or age, and could only be recovered by a heavy ransom. How harshly these poor captives were treated, we are but too clearly informed in the vivid pages of Homer ; and, on one occasion, Telemachus, for a slight offence, orders some unfortunate slaves to be hanged on the spot. The female captives

were charged with all the hard work and drudgery of the household, and it was their especial task to grind the corn, an arduous operation, performed by a clumsy and cumbersome handmill. Weaving and spinning, their other occupations, were undertaken also by the women of the family, from the mistress to her youngest daughter, and the highest rank did not exempt a woman from a share of the domestic duties. Both Helen and Penelope were skilful sempstresses; and Nausikaa, daughter of Alcinous, King of Phæacia, is represented at the river-side, assisting her female slaves to wash the linen of the family. This equal participation of labour imparts a softer tint to the dark complexion of the time. It is pleasant to follow Herodotus, with his ever-tripping step, into the simple hut of the King of Macedon, and behold the Queen engaged in the humble task of kneading flour, and baking bread. Not less striking is the picture given by Thucydides of the dwelling of Admetus, King of the Molossians. Here it was that Themistocles, on his flight from

Greece, found shelter and food, protected, though under the roof of a foe, by the sacred laws of hospitality. Weary and exhausted, the fallen statesman reached at night the well-known abode of the King: before him was darkness and a desert; behind, eager pursuers close on his track. But a glimmering light shows him the form of a woman, and in her breast he knows full well that the wretched may ever claim, if not a protectress, at least a friend. He enters the house, and, announcing his name, throws himself at the feet of the Queen, the wife of his sworn enemy. A step, too familiar to be mistaken, is heard without: it is the King's; but the ready tact of woman, never wanting at the call of humanity, is quick to interpose; and the Queen snatches her sleeping infant from its couch, and places it in the arms of the fugitive. The King is instantly disarmed by the spectacle; and Themistocles, detested as an enemy, is sheltered and succoured as a guest.

At an earlier period, the historian introduces us to the residence of the Kings of



Sparta, where Argia, the Queen, widow of Aristodemus, is seen washing and dressing her twin sons. These princes afterwards became joint kings of Sparta, and from the time of their accession, the Lacedemonian throne was always shared by two monarchs.

Previously to the historic period, the Greeks, like other primitive nations, obtained their wives by purchase from their parents ; but, according to Aristotle, the price was sometimes relinquished in favour of a distinguished suitor. Polygamy, as the case of Priam shows, was allowed, but not universally practised ; and the *Odyssey* relates that Laertes, King of Ithaca, declined to take a second wife, from a generous consideration for the feelings of Anticleia.

Among the Spartans, the position of woman was somewhat altered by the iron laws of Lycurgus. Aristotle, indeed, affirms that the Delphian missionary, bent on universal reformation, endeavoured to throw his heavy yoke over both sexes alike ; but was so vehemently opposed by the fairer portion of the community, that, at length, he con-

sented, as a compromise, to exempt them from his most severe restrictions. Hence a Spartan lady kept a sumptuous and liberal table at home, while her husband, as a patriotic citizen, was bound to drink black soup at the public refectory. Spartan women were famed for their beauty, and, by the code of Lycurgus, those who excelled in personal attractions, were, on public grounds, permitted to have two or even three husbands, so that it was not rare for the same woman to be mistress of two households and mother of two families. Such a practice necessarily involved great corruption of morals, insensibility to the natural conjugal ties, and even indifference to the claims of maternity. It was more obduracy, than patriotism, that dictated the Spartan mother's injunction to her son as he departed for battle, "Return either with your shield, or upon it!"

So loose was the nuptial connexion in Sparta, that it was not unlawful, or even unusual, for a man to give away his wife; and without any scruple, form, or legal pro-

cess, totally to dissolve their union. By this means King Ariston obtained the beautiful spouse of his friend Agetus, with whom he entered into a formal contract, ratified by oath, and solemnly referred to the gods, that each should give the other whatever he might desire of his worldly possessions. Ariston having performed his part of the agreement, by the sacrifice of a large sum of gold, claimed the more precious treasure of Agetus, and the overreached subject, obliged to comply with his demand, presented the King with his wife, who afterwards became the mother of Demaratus.

The Spartans, however, were not universally insensible to the domestic affections, and the strong ties of nature occasionally asserted their ascendancy, in spite of corrupt habits and vicious conventional usages. King Anaxerdrides could not be induced by the supposed infirmity of his Queen to resort to the cruel expedient of divorce, although, as the royal stock was in danger of extinction, it was repeatedly urged upon him by the Ephori; and to the remonstrances of

his subjects, he mildly replied that "they did not act justly, in urging him to dismiss his wife, when she had done nothing wrong, and take another in her place, and therefore he would not comply with their request." At last, indeed, as a compromise, he consented to contract a second marriage, without dissolving the first; but this arrangement was made with the consent of his Queen, who afterwards became "the joyful mother of children."

Nor are there wanting examples of conjugal tenderness and devotion among the Spartan women. The Minyæ, a tribe allied to the Lacedemonians, having been driven from their settlements at Lemnos by an irruption of the Pelasgians, were received and sheltered by the Spartans, who allotted them lands in their narrow territory, and gave them their daughters in marriage. But the Minyæ were not content to be guests, and gradually assumed the airs and arrogance of masters, on which the Lacedemonians, who valued nothing so much as their independence, fell upon them unexpectedly, and

seizing the whole tribe, threw them into prison, waiting only for night, when alone criminals could be executed, to put them to death. In the meantime, however, they allowed the wives of the Minyæ to enter their dungeons, to bid them a last adieu, and these devoted women availed themselves of the opportunity to exchange clothes with their husbands, who thus passed out unmolested; and when the Spartans came to slay their prisoners, they found, not the detested Minyæ, but their own daughters. A wild though sublime scene ensued; and in the end the punishment of the Minyæ was commuted to banishment, as a tribute to the pious affection of their wives.

The Lacedemonians gave large dowries with their daughters, often to the complete spoliation of their sons; and it was a common occurrence for a Spartan, at his death, to leave all his property exclusively to his daughters. By law and custom wealth was allowed to accumulate in the hands of women; but a rich man, however innocent and blameless his conduct, was looked upon with

suspicion. Women, moreover, instead of being shut up in secluded chambers, as in other parts of Greece, were, from their earliest youth, allowed the utmost liberty; and Xenophon and Plutarch describe them as taking part in the public games at the theatre—boxing, wrestling, and running races, in presence of the King, the state functionaries, and the young men of the city. Their costume was not unsuited to these athletic exercises, consisting simply of a light tunic, divided at the skirt, so as to leave the limbs, which were exposed to view, perfectly free from restraint. In this attire, and with their flowing hair wreathed with flowers, they took part in the religious ceremonies, sang and danced at the national festivals, and attended, in their turn, at the theatre, to witness the rigorous training of the young men. On the death of a King it was their duty to go in solemn procession through the city, attired in mourning, and beating a cauldron, and, at this ominous sound, a man and woman of every family were obliged to assume the same melancholy garb.

The Spartan damsel married at an early, though not an imprudent age, and the personal appearance, rather than the rank or means of the suitor, decided her election. Heiresses were at the disposal of the King, who, as a rule, bestowed them, without consulting either themselves or their parents, on the poorest citizens, so that the wealth of the nation might be distributed equally among all classes. When accepted, the suitor carried off his bride by force ; but in a few days she returned to the house of her father, and continued to reside under the parental roof for two or three years, only seeing her husband by stealth, and disguised in man's apparel. Usually she was mother of a family before she became mistress of a household.

The faith of a Spartan woman was plighted, not to her husband, but to the state, and this sentiment was impressed upon her in the first years of childhood. Herodotus describes it as a ruling principle in Gorgo, daughter of King Cleomenes, when only in her ninth year. The young

princess was accidentally present at an interview between her father and Aristagoras, Tyrant of Miletus, when the latter, anxious to engage the monarch in the Ionian war, offered an enormous sum for his services, gradually increasing the amount till it reached fifty talents. At this point he was interrupted by the little princess, who exclaimed to Cleomenes — “Father, this stranger will corrupt you, unless you depart :”—on which the King, who had begun to waver, and felt the truth of the child’s remark, was reminded of his duty, and rushed out of the room. Gorgo afterwards became the wife of Leonidas, who fell at the head of the immortal three hundred, in the pass of Thermopylæ; and it was through her instrumentality that the Greeks were first apprised of the approaching invasion of Xerxes. The intention of the Eastern tyrant had been discovered by Demaratus, who, together with many other Greeks, was then at Shushan, the Persian capital, and, though surrounded by spies, he contrived to inscribe the important in-



formation on a slab of wood, carefully coated with wax, which he sent to Sparta. The object of such a present, however, quite baffled the comprehension of the Spartans, till it was shown to Gorgo, who penetrated the mystery, and, by her advice, the wax was scraped away, and the latent writing revealed.

But patriotism was an inherent sentiment in the women of Greece; and the fair daughters of Athens, though reared under a totally different code, could be as stern in the public cause as the more favoured matrons of Sparta. On the defeat of the Athenians by the Argives in Ægina, the only survivor of their little band, on his return to the classic city, was seized in the street by the wives of those who had fallen, and beaten to death with the clasps of their girdles, each woman demanding, as she struck the wretched man, where he had left her husband. But their conduct was far from being applauded by the Athenians, who, instead of awarding the victor furies an olive crown, took alarm at such an

insurrection of the sex, and this exhibition of their prowess was made the pretext for an alteration in their costume. It was decreed that, from that time, the dress of the women should consist solely of a linen tunic, worn loose, so that there might be no need for a clasp, which, as the recent event showed, could, while it served to adorn a woman's waist, be applied very effectually over a man's shoulders. On the other hand, the Æginian and Argive women, whose husbands had been the victors in the battle at Ægina, as a memorial of the national triumph, and in derision of the Athenians, now made the clasp a more conspicuous feature in their dress, and gradually enlarged it to double the original size.

The Athenian women were not singular in their partiality for physical force, under the influence of national feelings or resentment. Thucydides, in his account of the Peloponnesian war, describes the women of Plataea as rising with their husbands to drive the Theban garrison from their city, and while the fugitives were pursued through

the narrow streets by the men, the fairer portion of the population pelted them with tiles from the roofs of the houses. But pity melted the heart of one of these Amazons, when she saw the Thebans hard pressed by their enemies, and handing them a hatchet, she enabled them to sever the bar of the city gate, and thus effect their escape.

Their violent passions often urged the Greek women to the verge of frenzy, and sometimes to actual madness. At one period, insanity assumed an epidemic character among the women of Argos, and every family had its female maniac. Terrified at such a visitation, the Argives had recourse to the skill of Melampus, who, after a time, succeeded in arresting the plague, but demanded their liberties as his reward. Even this hard penalty the Argives considered preferable to the disease.

The memorable clasp affray was not the only occasion on which the Athenian women signalized their resolution and their cruelty. Athens being reduced to great extremities

by the invasion of Mardonius, Lycidas, one of the senators, in a solemn assembly of the citizens, recommended that the state should send in its submission to the invader, on which he was adjudged to be stoned; and the women of Athens, hearing what had happened, determined that his innocent wife should share his fate. Accordingly they went in a body to his house, seized the terrified lady and her children, and drove them with frightful yells and imprecations through the city, every fair hand hurling a stone at their victims, till the sacrifice was complete.

Nor were the Athenian women less ferocious in their acts of private vengeance. At one of the festivals of Diana, the Pelasgians, in revenge for their expulsion from Attica, forcibly carried off fifty Athenian women as captives to Lemnos, and compelled them to become their wives. But these heroines, though subjected to every indignity and humiliation, could not be subdued by captivity. They trained up their children as bitter enemies to their

fathers, teaching them only the loved dialect of their native city, with the customs, principles, and religion of their countrymen, and their lessons were so effective, that the boys, as they grew up, scorned to associate with the Pelasgians. A horrid and sweeping tragedy was the climax of this unnatural discord. The women, unable any longer to suppress their resentment, deliberately murdered their husbands, and both they and their children were then put to death by the Pelasgians, who made no allowance for the cruel provocation they had received.

The national games and festivals of Greece, one of which had afforded the Pelasgians an opportunity of effecting this abduction, were eagerly attended by women, and were often chosen as auspicious occasions for marriage. Cleomenes, Tyrant of Sicyon, being victorious in the chariot race at the Olympic games, made a proclamation that "whoever of the Greeks deemed himself worthy to become the son-in-law of Cleomenes, should present

himself at Sicyon within sixty days, and submit to a year's trial of his capabilities and character, when the most deserving should be rewarded with his daughter's hand." Such a promise naturally attracted a number of competitors, not from Greece alone, but from all the surrounding countries, and even from Sicily and Italy, but among the whole of the assembled suitors, none found such permanent favour with Cliothenes himself as a young Athenian named Hippoclides, for whom he secretly destined the prize. Fate, however, was adverse to his intentions. On the day fixed for the momentous award, when the columned hall was crowded with the expectant suitors and noble guests, there was a vehement call for music, and Hippoclides, to the horror of the decorous father, leaped on the table and began to dance, finally turning over on his head, and kicking his heels in the air. At this unwonted spectacle, Cliothenes could no longer restrain his indignation, and angrily exclaimed, "Son of Tisander, you have danced away your

marriage.” “No matter,” cried the indifferent lover, “no matter to Hippoclides.” And he continued to amuse the company with his antics, till Cliothenes commanding silence, assigned the hand of his daughter to another Athenian, Megades, son of Alcmaeon. From this union sprang, in the second generation, the peerless Agarista, who, marrying Xanthippus, became the mother of Pericles.

An Athenian millionaire named Callias, who had been victor in the horse race in the Olympian games, and second in that of the chariots, resolved, under the influence of the popular applause, to bestow his three daughters in marriage in honour of his triumph. Accordingly, giving each of the maidens a magnificent dowry, he authorized them to choose a husband to their own taste, from their assembled countrymen, and then solemnized their respective nuptials in the most sumptuous and costly manner.

The institution of marriage, so lightly regarded by the Spartans, was revered by the Greek women generally, and they gave

innumerable proofs, both as wives and daughters, of their deep and earnest veneration of the domestic ties. What can be more touching than the conduct of Elpinice, who voluntarily gave her hand to secure the liberation of her father, the great Miltiades? or can fiction depict a scene more tender or sublime than the spectacle of Euphrasia giving nurture from her bosom to her famishing parent? The love of Labda for her infant son, afterwards Tyrant of Corinth, nerved her to defy a gang of armed desperadoes bent on his destruction. The Delphian oracle having declared that the child would ultimately become King of Corinth, his relatives, who had usurped the government, and wished to keep the sovereign power in their own hands, determined to prevent such a result by putting him to death. With this view, a band of conspirators presented themselves at the house of Labda, and requested to see the boy, all having previously bound themselves, under a solemn oath, that he who first received him should plunge a knife in his heart. But



the trusting infant, as he left the arms of his mother, met his intended murderer with a smile, and the man's heart being touched, he passed him on to one of his accomplices, who proved equally compassionate, and the infant was handed successively to each of the party with the same happy result. The whole gang then hastily left the house ; but the mother had now become alarmed, and listening at the door, she heard them abusing and deriding each other without, and finally agreeing to return, and, by striking together, all take an equal share in the murder. Alone, and out of reach of help, whether of friends or neighbours, Labda might have looked on the event as certain ; but she retained her presence of mind, and, regardless of her own safety, noiselessly secreted the child in an adjacent chest of meal. Hardly had she done so, when the ruffians burst again into her presence, and, no longer concealing their object, searched every part of the house for the infant, without once glancing at his covert. Baffled and enraged, they then

turned in a fury on Labda ; but no threats could move the devoted mother to divulge her secret, and, at length, they were obliged to abandon their design, and leave the issue to destiny. So nearly did fate snatch from fame Cypselus, Tyrant of Corinth.

The love of Xantippe gives additional pathos to the last moments of Socrates ; and it was the more striking, because it seemed, to those who had no perception of the often-hidden depths of woman's heart, to be wholly inconsistent with her natural disposition. Xantippe was the scold of Athens. Socrates, indeed, as he once avowed, had made her his wife solely that he might be continually subjected to the discipline of her temper, a probation which, in his opinion, would enable him to bear patiently the bitterest taunts and abuse of his enemies. We try in vain to conceive a shrew, compared with whom the Katherine of Petruchio was insipid and tame. Yet, under her intractable temper, this woman masked, in sullen disdain, a warm and loving heart. Her son

Lamprocles, in describing her to Xenophon, emphatically declares that she exceeds in fierceness the wild beasts of the forest, but, in the same breath, acknowledges her to be a kind, indulgent, and anxious parent. In the thirty days that intervened between the condemnation of Socrates and his death, she could not be induced to leave his side. After an interval of two thousand years, we still look back with sympathy at the memorable scene, in which this Athenian virago, now melted in tears, was one of the principal figures. The venerable philosopher sits calm and majestic, in the midst of his weeping friends, who are scarcely affected more by his almost divine words than by the emotion and touching sorrow of his wife. At that moment she seems to participate the sublime greatness of his spirit—to follow his eye, so soon to be sealed by death, through the thick veil of Pagan superstition, to the realm of a second existence—to the glorious throne of the UNKNOWN GOD. His friends urge him to escape, and proffer the means of effecting and securing his flight; she listens in

silence while the philosopher, true to his mission, gently reminds them that he has often braved death in the service of his country, and that he cannot prolong, by a breach of the laws, a life so near its natural close. He then receives the deadly cup, and with a smile, bids adieu to his wife, to his sorrowing friends and disciples, and to a corrupt, obdurate, and besotted world.

The Greek nation, and especially the community of Athens, were indeed ill prepared to receive that ethereal philosophy which was taught and preached by Socrates. The disposition of the people of Attica was essentially vicious and dissolute; and this was mainly owing, in the first instance, to the complete repudiation and renouncement of the influence of woman. Great wrongs work out their own retribution; and the oppression of the weak, in the end, recoils, in some way or other, on the insolent and strong. The demoralization of female society in Athens, which at first was confined to the slaves, gradually worked up, through successive grades, to the highest rank, and

tainted the whole fabric. In one age we behold even a princess of the royal house of Codrus publicly convicted of vice. Her trespass was fearfully punished by her incensed father, Hippomenes, the Archon, who, regardless of the entreaties of his friends and kindred, shut her up in a dungeon with a wild horse, without food or water, while her lover, in cruel derision, was yoked to a chariot, and driven through the streets till he expired.

Such excesses paved the way for the severe laws of Draco, which Demades, with his usual felicity of expression, forcibly describes as written, not in ink, but blood. Draco, indeed, is said to have observed that the least offences merited death, and that he could devise no greater punishment for the worst. The volatile Athenians could not long submit to a yoke too heavy to be borne; and, after a troublous interval, they referred the task of carefully revising the laws to Solon, son of Execestides, justly surnamed “the Wise.” This illustrious sage, aided by the genius and influence of

Pisistratus, who was now in the zenith of his fame, succeeded in establishing a code suited alike to the peculiar temperament of the people, and the purposes of morality. He seems to have directed especial attention to the reformation of the female portion of the community, and framed many laws relating exclusively to women, which, though quite unintelligible to a modern understanding, doubtless had reference to some particular circumstances of their condition, not preserved by the careless hand of history. Thus they were prohibited from leaving home with more than three changes of apparel, and a specified allowance of provisions; and at night, they were only suffered to appear in the streets in a carriage, and preceded by flambeaux. They usually married at fifteen, and the hand of a maiden, whether rich or poor, was at the disposal of her parents, or rather of her father, who gave her a portion, or exacted a dower, at his own will and pleasure. Women of all ages lived in strict seclusion, and could not attend even funerals except under certain

restrictions, which officers, deriving their authority from the Areopagi, were appointed to watch and enforce. Their employments, when the ordinary domestic duties were discharged, consisted of spinning, weaving, and embroidering; and women were regularly trained as accoucheurs, a profession which was followed by Phænarete, the mother of Socrates.

But the laws of Solon failed to oppose a check to the inherent depravity of the Athenians, and, by degrees, they relapsed into their original social corruption, which grew more and more inveterate as they began to mingle with the Persians. The domestic relations were poisoned at their source; and a number of foreign women, called Hetæraë, or companions, were introduced by the Greeks into their houses, and made the associates of their wives. Athenian matrons did not scruple to accompany their dissolute husbands to the house of Aspasia, the mistress of Pericles, who avowedly maintained a number of the Hetæraë under her roof, and shared both their guilt and their spoil.

This was the golden age of Athenian splendour, luxury, refinement, and vice. The glowing colours of Agatharcus and Zeuxis embellished the public buildings of the city; Phidias adorned the Parthenon with its classic columns, its sculptured tracery, its statues of marble, brass, and gold; and the combined skill of Mnesicles, Callicrates, and Ictinus, directed by the taste and judgment of Pericles, could be traced in the spacious vestibule of the Citadel. The streets were thronged with orators, philosophers, artists, and students; music was heard in every house, and riot in every tavern; and, more than all, Socrates, standing out from the brightest points of the picture, instructed rapt crowds in the garden of the Academy, in the busy precincts of the Agora, and on the consecrated summit of the hill of Mars.

Such was the city in which Aspasia, a foreigner and a slave, held a more than regal court. This gifted woman, who was the daughter of Axiochus, the Milesian, as greatly excelled all her contemporaries in



her rare mental endowments, as in personal beauty, and, notwithstanding her depraved course of life, was bound to Pericles by a romantic passion. The attachment was mutual, and for Aspasia the Athenian magnate abandoned his wife and children, though his incorrigible parsimony, which contrasted strangely with his brilliant intellectual qualities, withheld him from contributing to her maintenance. So miserly, indeed, was the great Pericles, that his son was compelled to sue him for the means of subsistence, and, in providing for his household, his steward was expressly charged to buy at the lowest prices the cheapest commodities in the market. But this did not check the fervid love of Aspasia, or prevent her from living in luxury and splendour; and Pericles, while he denied her his purse, so entirely reciprocated her affection, that he never entered or quitted her house without saluting her. When she was prosecuted for impiety by Hermippus, he personally conducted her defence; and the appeal he made in her behalf was so moving, that, while it

melted his audience, it filled his own eyes with tears. It was to Aspasia, indeed, he owed the high character, if not the actual gift of his eloquence, and she is even said to have been the author of his celebrated oration on the victims of the Samian war. Plato affirms that the Athenians learnt from her the art of oratory, and that her beauty was less attractive than her wisdom and wit. Fame, with its brazen trumpet, spread her reputation over Asia, and King Cyrus gave the name of Aspasia to Melto, his favourite wife, in compliment to the courtesan of Athens.

We can nowhere find a woman occupying so anomalous a position, and so powerfully influencing the tone of society. Her gorgeous saloon, enriched with the paintings of Zeuxis, was the favourite resort, not of Pericles alone, but of Socrates, the wisest and most virtuous of men—of statesmen, warriors, poets, sophists, who, forgetting their animosities, jealousies, and bickerings, here came with their wives to mingle with the frail Hetære, and listen to the bewitching accents of Aspasia. And at this time

war raged without, and pestilence walked unchecked through the streets, smiting rich and poor alike. Suddenly a cry rang through the house, through the city, through Greece. The fell disease, which baffled the utmost skill of the physician, had struck down Pericles. Supported by the arm of Aspasia, he received on his couch the sad adieus of his friends, and calmly awaited the approach of death. Meanwhile, an orator, as if inspired by the spectacle, eloquently recounted the illustrious deeds of his life, and reminded him that they would survive, when he himself should be no more. “My friend,” exclaimed the dying man, “you describe and extol acts of mine, which have been equalled by other generals and statesmen; but you omit to mention the most honourable testimony to my character—that no Athenian through my means ever put on mourning.” And with these words, the last great light of Greece expired.

## X.

## ROME.

THE name of Rome is the most precious bequest of history. Cradled in fables, nurtured in superstition, trained amidst the turmoil and the horrors of war, the character of the Roman people developed itself under every difficulty ; and the citizen of that great republic is still the standard by which we measure our liberties, our prerogatives, and our virtues. All that is heroic and glorious is contained in the venerable annals of Rome, commanding alike the admiration, the interest, and the sympathy of mankind ; and in contemplating the sad spectacle of her decrepitude and decline, or reading the disgraceful story of her fall, we are consoled by reminiscences of her infancy, youth,

hardy and vigorous prime, and splendid meridian. The Eternal City, equally of the past and the future, is the proud appellation yet assumed by a town on the banks of the Tiber, the corpse of what once was Rome ; and so hallowed is the spot by associations and ruins, that the whole world has accepted and adopted the title.

The original government of Rome was in principle similar to that now existing in England, consisting of a King, an aristocracy, and a commonalty, the one material difference being—what indeed was productive of serious disorder—that the monarchy was elective. The legal enactments were framed by the King, who submitted them to the senate, an assembly composed of the hereditary nobility, or patricians ; and they only became law, when, having passed this ordeal, they were ultimately approved by a convention of the commons. At first, the popular constituency comprised thirty tribes, corresponding to the parishes of the city, but it afterwards received successive augmentations, till, in the reign of Augustus,

it numbered sixty thousand voters. The plebeian, as he approached the elective urn, passed over a narrow platform, called the *vons*, or bridge, and here he announced aloud the side which he supported, and publicly recorded his vote. As he was often watched to the poll by a jealous patron, an employer, or a creditor, it was thought that this open mode of voting was incompatible with purity of election, and it was ultimately superseded by the ballot; which, however, instead of securing the object desired, exercised a very pernicious effect on the national character, and, from that moment, the Roman citizen declined in virtue. Meanwhile, the government had undergone various other changes. Tarquin, supported by the equestrian order, had rendered the regal authority despotic, and on his expulsion from Rome, and the abolition of royalty, his usurped prerogatives were seized by the patricians, who for a considerable period kept the ignorant commonalty in subjection, without admitting them to the honours of office. But these were gradually wrested from the senate,

and certain political dignities, which eventually became the highest prizes of ambition, were placed at the annual disposal of the plebeians. Such a constitution seemed unwieldy in the eyes of a tyrant; and Augustus, while he professed the greatest deference for popular institutions, substituted for the democratic element a council of six hundred nobles, who retained the name and rank of senators, but were dependent for their honours and their fortune on the will of the Emperor. The latter now wanted nothing, for the consolidation of his power, but the removal, as far as regarded his own acts, of all legal restrictions; and this was speedily conceded by the obsequious senate, who, by a solemn decree, declared the Emperor "released from the law," and thus broke down the last defensible bulwark of liberty and order.

The laws of Rome, on which the existing codes of several European nations are founded, opposed, in their original form, a salutary check to magisterial power, though, at the same time, they pressed with severity

and rigour on the community. Originated by Romulus, they were successively augmented by the piety and wisdom of Numa, and the more practical experience of Servius Tullus, who, though not the founder, may claim to be considered the moulder of the Roman statutes. The entire code was carefully inscribed on tablets of brass, called from their number the Twelve Tables, and it commanded for ages the veneration and the implicit obedience of the people. By its stern enactments, which have been forcibly compared with those of Draco, capital punishment was adjudged to no less than eight offences, and one mode of execution was the cruel and agonizing death of the cross. But, as society advanced, the provisions of the Twelve Tables were found inadequate for the altered requirements of the times, and the prætors and tribunes, in the exercise of their judicial functions, were authorized to meet particular cases by edicts of their own; which, however, had no permanent authority, and were even repeatedly abrogated by the framer himself.



The mischief arising from such precarious and capricious legislation was ultimately corrected by *Sulvius Julian*, who, in the reign of *Adrian*, collected, by command of the Emperor, the whole body of edicts, and digested them into one complete code, which, under the name of the *Perpetual Edict*, became the statutory law of the empire. Finally, *Justinian*, aided by the genius and profound legal knowledge of *Tribonian*, produced his celebrated *Code*, *Institutes*, and *Pandects*, which entirely rescinded all previous legislation, and must remain the basis of civil jurisprudence to the latest times.

Before considering the effect of these successive systems on woman, in connexion with her moral, social, and domestic relations, it may be well to glance at the religious institutions of Rome, with which the sex were closely associated, and which necessarily exercised a leading influence on society.

The Romans were early remarkable for their deep religious feeling, their veneration

of the forms, ceremonies, and consecrated rites of religion, and their jealous attention to the celebration of public worship. Romulus, whose comprehensive genius let nothing escape, was the originator of this national characteristic, and it was further developed by the institutions, the laws, and the example of Numa. All the gods, with the ample calendar of inferior divinities, were the objects of Roman idolatry; but especial homage was rendered to the three guardians of the city, Jupiter, Juno, and Vesta. The pagan King of Deities was throned in the Capitolium, a superb structure, on the Tarpeian rock, covering four acres of ground, and answering the double purpose of a temple and a citadel. A hundred steps conducted the devotee to the magnificent vestibule of the edifice, and three rows of columns, of purest marble, admitted him to the brazen threshold, where the spacious and stately interior burst on the charmed eye. All that taste and devotion could conceive, art execute, or unbounded treasures procure, was lavished

on its adornment ; and its roof of burnished gold looked down on swelling statues, drapery of every hue, goblets and shields glittering with gems—arms, standards, and chariots, the untold spoil of conquered nations. Priests and priestesses were appointed for the service of the shrine, and the sacrifices were solemnly consecrated by the supreme pontiff.

Superstition looked into the entrails of the offered victim for the oracles and decisions of fate. This was the province of the Harispex, or soothsayer, who, when the body of the animal was opened, examined every part, and drew his inferences from the tone of the whole. If the entrails fell from his hand, were gorged with blood, or exhibited any natural defect, the gods were unpropitious ; but when the eager flame rose pure and bright round the altar, and devoured the mangled victim, a favourable result was expected. The Augurs, another order of prophets, drew their omens from the appearances of nature, or from incidents occurring at the critical moment

of divination. Standing on the summit of a tower, with his face to the east, the south on his right, and the chilly north on his left, the augur raised aloft his crooked staff, divided the frowning sky into four parts, and read the awful messages of destiny in the aspect of the heavenly bodies, heard them pronounced by thunder, or saw them gleam in the flashing lightning. The idea, though dictated by superstition, was not wanting in sublimity, but the step to the ridiculous was inevitable ; and it provokes a smile when we hear of a great nation being intimidated by the sudden appearance of a flight of birds, or by the casual overturning of the salt.

Juno was a favourite deity of the Roman people, and particularly of the Roman matrons, who once a year held a festival in her honour. But Vesta, her sister, the goddess of fire, enjoyed the largest share of popularity, and was provided by the state with the most liberal foundation. A circular temple enshrined her image, and here, in a secret recess, tradition deposited the vene-

rable palladium of Troy, while the sacred flame yielded the goddess continual incense from a neighbouring altar. Six maiden priestesses, called the Vestales, or Vestals, were intrusted with the custody of the building, which, by the laws of Numa, no male was permitted to enter. The Vestals were selected for the office in their sixth or seventh year, and comprised both plebeian and patrician maidens, without reference to caste, though it was essential, as a condition of election, that they should be members of a respectable family, and be personally free from blemish. On their consecration, they took a vow of celibacy for thirty years, which was divided into three decades—the first, while they were yet children, being devoted to their initiation in the mysteries and duties of the priesthood; the second to the public discharge of the sacerdotal functions; and the third to the instruction of those rising Vestals who were to be their successors. After the thirtieth year, they were released from the yoke of office, and permitted to marry.

One of the principal duties of the Vestals was to keep the hallowed fire of the goddess perpetually burning. When this, from want of timely attention, was suffered to expire, grief and terror were depicted on every countenance in Rome; and, while the responsible priestess underwent the punishment of the scourge, the flame was solemnly rekindled by the rays of the sun, attracted through a consecrated lens. Such a casualty was, however, of rare occurrence, and the fire burnt with but few interruptions for a thousand years, when it was finally extinguished by Theodosius, and the worship of Vesta abolished.

The Vestals were held in high respect by the Romans, and were endowed with peculiar privileges. The iron thralldom of parental control, so oppressive in Rome, was shaken off by the dedicated child the moment she entered the sisterhood, in token of which the officiating priestess shaved her head, and crowned her with the liberating *infula*. Vestals were at liberty to dispose of their property and possessions as they pleased:

their evidence was received in courts of justice without the formality of an oath ; and in difficult cases, they were often chosen as judges and arbitrators. They had the power of pardoning criminals whom they met accidentally in the streets ; the chief places were assigned them at the public games ; and all classes, from the highest magistrate to the slave, fell back at their approach, the very lictors of the consul turning their fasces as they passed.

The dress of the Vestals, who were all remarkable for their beauty, was well adapted to set off their charms, while it was not unsuited to their office. A surplice of white linen hung loosely over a vest of the same colour, bordered with purple, and a purple mantle fell from the shoulders over the back, and swept the ground. Their recovered hair was inclosed in the infula, from which gay ribbons, called vittæ, streamed down to the mantle, forming a head-dress as elegant as it was unique. Even this costume, however, did not satisfy the taste, or the caprice, of some of the fair priestesses, and

Livy records that the Vestal Postunian, in the fourth century of the republic, was brought to trial for wearing robes of too sumptuous a character, as well as for the freedom and levity of her manners; and narrowly escaped condemnation. Entombment alive was the penalty entailed by a single infringement of the vestal vow. The place of sepulture, where the last expiation was enacted, was at a spot called "the field of wickedness," in a low small cavity, at the bottom of a pit, constructed by Tarquin. Into this hole the condemned Vestal was thrust; a dim lamp, kindled from the fire of the outraged goddess, showed the narrow dimensions of her grave; a flask of water was placed at her feet; and the tomb was then closed on its living tenant. Eighteen young and beautiful women, some the victims of perjury, all of perfidy, perished in this revolting and horrible manner; so refined and so implacable is the cruelty of man!

While the Romans intrusted the highest offices of religion to the Vestals, the State preserved, as a sacred deposit, on which its



safety and welfare depended, the mystic writings of another woman, a prophetess, whom it regarded as the infallible arbitress of its destiny. The Sibylline verses were brought to Tarquin the Second by an old and venerable matron, who, making her way into the King's presence, produced nine antique volumes, for which she asked an exorbitant price. Tarquin refused to become the purchaser, and she withdrew, but presently returned, having burnt three of the books, and demanded the same sum for the remaining six. A second refusal, more decided than the first, again drove her away, when three more of the precious tomes were sacrificed, and she presented herself a third time before the King, still insisting on the same price for the three that were left. The amazed monarch was struck by her pertinacity, which, in the superstitious spirit of the times, he attributed to a divine impulse, and after a vain attempt to abate her demands, he tendered the money required, and thus became the possessor of these renowned oracles. No sooner had the

payment been made, than the aged vendor mysteriously disappeared, nor could any trace of her ever be discovered.

The Sibylline verses were placed by Tarquin under the watchful care of a college of priests, and were only consulted on extraordinary occasions, when circumstances threatened the very existence of the commonwealth. They were lost in the great conflagration of Rome, during the troubles of Sylla; but some passages of other Sibylline prophecies were collected in Greece, whither commissioners were despatched by the senate for the purpose, and these venerated fragments were carefully preserved in the priestly archives. The verses were written on the leaves of plants, probably of the papyrus, and were placed by the Sibyls at the entrance of their caves, whence, if not immediately removed, they were swept away by the wind, and the occult writing became effaced. There may be an allusion to this fact in the beautiful simile of Isaiah—"We all do fade as the leaf, and our iniquities, like the wind, do carry us away."

The first of the holy sisterhood of whom we have any account, apart from the records of fable, is Miriam, the sister of Moses. Deborah is the only other Sibyl who is especially mentioned in the pages of Scripture ; and the heathen writers, as might be expected, differ, according to their age or country, as to the precise number who have received or inherited the Sibylline mantle. Plato instances but one ; three are mentioned by Pliny ; Ælian speaks of four, and Varro of ten, the number usually adopted by the learned. Eight volumes of Sibylline prophecies are still extant ; but the minuteness with which they describe the character and sufferings of our Saviour, so much more literally than the sublime prophecies of Isaiah, excites a suspicion that they were composed after the event, probably by some zealous monk, and they are now universally regarded as spurious.

Between the predictions of the Sibyl, and the functions of the Vestals, it must be confessed that women exercised, in a religious point of view, considerable influence on the

government of Rome. Nevertheless, their social position, whether as wives or daughters, was a painful and ignominious one, and gradually corrupted their own character, while it vitiated that of the whole Roman race. Their servitude began with their birth, and ended only in the grave. The early laws of the republic armed every father with the authority of a despot; and liberty or bondage, life or death, were the terrible prerogatives of the Roman patriarch. A man could, at his own will, under the sanction and protection of the law, throw his daughter into a dungeon, withhold her food, cover her with stripes, or sell her as a slave. Even so late as the reign of Augustus, Erixo, a Roman magnate, deliberately scourged his son till he expired; Arixas sentenced his heir to perpetual banishment; and, in the reign of Adrian, a jealous father punished his child with the assassin's dagger. Another yoke was imposed on woman by the stringent law of classes. Apart from the two primitive orders of patricians and plebeians, there were the wide distinctions of

*ingenuous* and *servile* birth, which, whatever the rank of the father, was fixed by the actual grade of the mother. An intermediate class was composed of libertines, or freedmen—slaves who had been emancipated by their masters, but who, by a strange anomaly, remained in a sort of semi-bondage, till they were invested by Justinian with the privileges of the *ingenuous* rank. Intermarriages of these grades, which could not but be frequent, exposed the woman to new degradation, and often made her the miserable parent of slaves.

The law invariably pressed upon her, in all her relations, with peculiar hardship. From the moment of her birth, she was supposed to have no capacity and no feeling; and both in her father's and her husband's house, she was treated, not as a living being, but as a mere piece of furniture. In the distribution of property, the *agnats*, or descendants of males, took precedence, to the most remote degree, of the nearest *cognats*, or representatives of females, even to the exclusion of a wife or mother; and

by the Voconian statutes the right of female inheritance was altogether suppressed. This new code debarred a woman from receiving a legacy, if it amounted to more than a hundred thousand sesterces; and an only daughter, the last scion of a race, was rendered incapable of inheriting the property of her father. The Tertulian and Orphitian edicts annulled this abominable enactment; and the laws of Justinian, while they purified the polluted seat of judgment, restored to women the rights of inheritance and of nature.

The Roman maiden became a wife at the early age of twelve. In accordance with an ancient usage, she was regularly purchased, like any other slave, by her husband, and the terms were registered in a formal written deed, which might be regarded as the marriage certificate. The bride emphatically renounced the endearing ties of kindred, declared herself the daughter and the servant of the bridegroom, and exchanged the stern discipline of her paternal home for the bondage of matrimony. By a

present of three pieces of copper, she signified her subjection to her husband, and her obligation to surrender unreservedly to him all she possessed, when, after a sacrifice of fruits to the tutelary gods, the officiating priest symbolised their union by the mystic elements of fire and water, and then, in the presence of ten witnesses, placed on her finger the nuptial pledge, or ring, threw over her head the flaming veil, invested her with the household keys, and gave to both bride and bridegroom a piece of the bridal cake, composed of salt and meal, which they ate together, seated on a sheepskin. From this moment the husband assumed over his wife the jurisdiction of life and death; he could lash her with the scourge, load her with chains, or slay her with his sword. All her property, everything she might ever inherit, became his; and he could at any time, without reason or pretext, snatch the keys from her girdle, expel her from his house, and publicly deprive her of the wretched dignity of a wife. To what an extent divorce and murder were ultimately

carried we may learn in the pages of Juvenal; and that brilliant poet mentions, as no extraordinary facts, a man who had buried his twenty-first wife, and a woman who had just been divorced from her eighth husband. A system so innately corrupt naturally led to general social demoralization: what is tainted at the core, becomes in a little time rotten throughout; and the days of the empire, when tyranny and vice were leagued with luxury, and disdained even the flimsiest mask, exhibit such a pitch of depravity, as now awakens in every mind a thrill of pious horror. The women of this time were indeed bad, but the men were demons.

From such a period, it is a relief to look back, through ages of strife and disorder, to the first dawn of Rome, though the scene that presents itself is one of violence and tumult. The city has just risen, like a young plant—almost like a weed, from the marsh of the Tiber: already it has put forth its buds and leaves, yet none who beheld it then, in its early promise, could dream that



its mighty and majestic boughs would one day overshadow the earth. A joyous festival has brought crowds of strangers to its gates, all clad in holiday attire, all beaming with content, hilarity, and gladness, making the air ring with their merry voices. Old men are there, leaning on a trusty staff, or perhaps the arm of a sturdy youth, the hope and support of their waning years; happy mothers lead on their smiling children; young and lovely maidens, though watched by eyes that never slack their vigilance, contrive, as they walk along, to give such play to the jealous veil, that it shall not wholly conceal their charms. The jocund throngs pour in a stream through the streets, which, arched with verdant branches, and festooned with garlands, present a strangely picturesque appearance. The massive ramparts, manned with noble striplings—the simple yet tasteful temples—the palace of the King—the rising greatness of infant Rome, in turn excite their surprise, their admiration, and their applause. As they proceed, they are

met by a horseman of imposing mien, Romulus, the founder of the city—who, amidst hearty shouts, and strains of rude but stirring music, leads the way, with his guards and courtiers, to the spacious circus, expressly constructed for the games of the day. But a wild cry interrupts and terminates the peaceful spectacle. The Roman youths have seized on the stranger maidens, and, regardless of the threats and remonstrances of their parents, and their own moving entreaties, sweep them in a body from the arena. One damsel of surpassing beauty, whose veil had been torn from her face, becomes an object of fierce contention; and the enamoured Romans strive with each other for the prize, till a warrior more daring than the rest, waving aloft his naked sword, spurs into the midst of the throng, snatches the terrified girl in his arms, and shouting his name of Thalassius, triumphantly bears her off. He is pursued by a hundred competitors; but a troop of armed horsemen, his kinsmen and adherents, gather

round him, and till crying "Thalassius! Thalassius!" secure his flight.

Another scene quickly succeeds, when the incensed Sabines, after a solemn invocation of the gods, appeal for justice and for revenge to the stern fiat of the sword. The two armies are already engaged, the arrows fly in clouds through the air, shields ring with the clash of arms, and the shock of mortal strife; but such sounds and such terrors, accompanied by the groans of the wounded and the dying, cannot overcome the holy devotion of woman. The two hosts are suddenly arrested by a third but far different party, who rush between the hostile ranks, their garments rent and soiled, their long hair falling in dishevelled tresses, their hands clasped in mute supplication, their eyes streaming with tears. On one side, instead of enemies, they behold their husbands: the other claims from them the dutiful love of children. They passionately adjure them to recognise these ties, and sheathe their angry weapons; and, touched by their heroism, the contending legions become at

once brothers and allies on the field of battle.

We might linger for a moment by the mournful bier of Lucretia, when, bending over her bleeding corpse, Brutus swore to avenge the outrage committed on Rome. Or stand between the columns of the Forum, and watch the discomfiture and dismay of Appius, as the beautiful Virginia, in the first glow of her youth and bloom, in the presence of her betrothed lover, and in front of the tribunal of judgment, fell beneath the knife of her distracted father. But these incidents are too familiar to call for description. They are the earliest lessons of every mind; and show us, by examples too awful to be forgotten, how highly female purity was regarded in Rome, at a time when virtue was the proud, almost the distinguishing characteristic of the Roman citizen.

Women were encouraged to pursue an unblemished life, and to evince zeal and devotion for their country, by public rewards, or by some special mark of popular favour. The festival of the Matronalia was

instituted in honour of the Sabine matrons, and the names of the patriotic women who presented their trinkets for the use of the Commonwealth, in a time of universal distress, were, by order of the senate, inscribed on cups of gold, placed on the altar of the Capitol. Those who were conspicuous for their virtues became enshrined in the memory of the people: funeral orations, reciting and commending their excellent qualities, were pronounced over their graves, their names were perpetuated as household words, and are still preserved for the veneration of posterity.

The early generations of matrons, the mothers of Rome, partook largely of the deep religious spirit which then characterised the whole nation. The most pleasing duty of the young maiden was to walk in the sacred processions, to join in the chorus of female minstrels, to strew flowers on the marble floor of the temple, or to hang garlands round the altar. At the festival of Bacchus, a band of young girls, selected from the most honourable families of Rome,

traversed the principal streets, bearing in baskets of gold the mysterious emblems of the divinity, concealed beneath clustering wreaths of vine, ivy, and myrtle. The matrons, with touching ingenuousness, confided their inmost thoughts and dearest wishes to the ear of their tutelary goddess. To Vesta they prayed for life and health ; to Juno for prosperity ; to Venus, their especial benefactress, for the blessings and the gifts of domestic life. It was in Cytherea's temple, according to Juvenal, that the Roman matron besought the goddess, in orthodox whispers, as the ancient formulary prescribed, to endow her children with grace, symmetry, and beauty. She made offerings of flowers at the shrine of Juno, and repeated her daily vows and orisons before the guardian Genius of the family.

But this religion, instead of elevating, corrupted or perverted the minds of its disciples. The morals of the early Romans were severe, but they were based on a false and pernicious principle. Woman was taught to consider herself a slave, and to act as one ;

for in the hour of conscious weakness, when nature arms her with an innate strength, it was deemed honourable and heroic, instead of bravely facing calamity, to seek a coward's refuge in death. Thus, under certain circumstances, suicide was absolutely held to be a duty; and Portia swallowing fire, Sophonisba receiving from her lover the cup of poison, Arria gashing her breast with her husband's dagger, though rendered more striking by the halo of history, were, in fact, but common incidents in the domestic life of Rome.

Happy had it been for the imperial city if the perversion of their daughters had stopped here; but what is wrong in principle, even when prompted by a feeling of rectitude, must, in the end, pervade the whole mind with its evil influence. Brought up with the belief that it was proper and becoming, in particular situations, to cast off by suicide the sacred obligations of life, woman, familiarized with death, began to seek relief from oppression, or a hateful union, by murder. During the consulates

of Marcellus and Valerius, a virulent distemper made its appearance in Rome, which, baffling every precaution, carried off a number of the principal citizens in a manner singularly mysterious. While the city was overwhelmed with consternation, a maid-servant presented herself before Fabius Maximus, the curile ædile, and offered, if secured from personal harm, and the vengeance of those she would have to denounce, to disclose the cause of the mortality. The public faith being pledged for her protection, she asserted that all who had died so mysteriously were the victims of poison; and, through her means, a number of women, including twenty respectable matrons, and two of high patrician rank, named Cornelia and Sergia, were detected in the very act of compounding drugs for the purpose she stated. They were instantly conveyed to the Forum: and, on their examination, alleging that the drugs were wholesome, they were urged to demonstrate the fact by partaking of the preparation, which, after a consultation, they agreed to do, and deli-



berately quaffing the poisoned draught, expired where they stood. These, however, were not the only persons implicated, and, further inquiries being instituted, the guilty practice was traced to a hundred and seventy matrons of the best families of Rome, who were all condemned to death, and underwent the ignominy of a public execution.

But the evil was not eradicated; and the art of poisoning, at first confined to a few, soon became a fashionable study, and its practice a popular vice. Juvenal warns the parents of Rome that their daughters will speedily be presented with the death-cup, or perhaps strangled in the night, if their husbands, who are bound to them by such slender ties, are to gain a legacy at their decease. He admonishes the husband to be careful how he partakes of the meats dressed by his wife, the son to refrain, if possible, from the dainties prepared by his mother. The removal of stepsons by poison was an every-day occurrence; and Pontia, the wife of Drymis, deliberately poisoned her own children, and then com-

mitted suicide. The Empress Cesonia administered a deadly potion to her uncle, and successively poisoned all who incurred her enmity, including many senators and knights. The crime pervaded every rank, from the crowned head to the slave; and the palace and the hovel were equally infected, and equally the scenes of danger.

Poison was sometimes given unintentionally in a love-philter. These potions, even when most innocuous, produced a terrible effect on the frame, which, indeed, became permanently debilitated from their use. They were prepared with magical incantations; and consisted of extraordinary, though usually most potent and most noxious ingredients. The philter presented by Cesonia to the uncle of Nero contained an infusion from the forehead of a foal. The wretched man, after enduring intolerable agonies, became raving mad. Dotage, mental oblivion, dizziness of the brain, delirium, with convulsions and paralysis, were the results ultimately produced by these fearful distillations; and fortunate

indeed was the recipient who escaped with his senses.

This was not the only means by which the Roman lady, instead of trusting to the influence of her charms, sought to inspire the tender passion. Incantations and superstitious observances were a still more common resource; and the Phrygian or Indian soothsayer, who could discern the course of true love in the stars, or the Jewish sorceress, who could read a lady's fate in her face—decidedly the safest criterion, were only too frequently consulted. Women of humbler means learnt their destiny from the fortune-teller of the circus, who, after they had walked slowly round the whole circumference of the arena, between the double row of columns, was able to elicit the required information from the inequalities of their foreheads, or the lines of their hands.

Ladies who had recourse to such mystic agencies were particularly careful to carry out, in every detail, the suggestions and injunctions of their occult adviser. Before proceeding on a journey, they looked into

the calendar of Thrasyllus, the teacher and astrologer of Tiberius ; they dared not anoint their eyes till they had referred to their horoscope, and only rose from their couch in the morning at a lucky hour. Wretched indeed was their plight, if, from accident or forgetfulness, they put forth their left foot first, and a single look cast behind, utterly destroyed the spell.

These harmless, though ridiculous practices, were chiefly annoying to their observers ; but superstition begins with trifles, and invariably ends with enormities. From the darkened closet of the astrologer, the Roman lady, growing bolder in error, descended to the cave of the sorceress, who, disdaining the entrails of a bird, drew her auguries from the reeking heart of a child, offered as a sacrifice to the infernal gods.

Children were easily procured for these abominable and horrible rites. Infanticide, the usual result of imperfect marriage ties, which are not more subversive of conjugal than of parental affection, was fearfully prevalent, and, till a late period, was not for-

bidden by the laws. But many who, in the worst times, shrank from imbruing their hands in blood, unscrupulously abandoned their children at night, in some lonely part of the city. The spot ordinarily chosen was the Herb Market, at the foot of the Aventine, and here infants could be purchased for any purpose, or carried off by the first comers. A mother, dissatisfied with the personal appearance of her child, selected here one more suited to her taste, and whose beauty, set off by gems and purple, would sustain the credit of her lineage, while her own despised infant shared, as a foundling, the chain of the slave.

But we can glance but briefly at the guilt and turpitude of the empire, and must draw a veil over the wickedness of Agrippina, the incredible vice of Messalina, and the profligacy of Statilia. Marriage, anciently a solemn religious ceremony, however it might have been abused, had now become a mere name. Frequently even the deed of covenant and the ten witnesses were dispensed with, and the venerable usages of antiquity

were treated with contempt and ridicule. Both parties were invested with the prerogative of divorce, and could dissolve by a word, a stroke of the pen, or a wave of the hand, the most precious institution of society and of religion.

The habits, employments, and even the amusements of the Roman matrons, of the highest as well as the lowest grades, had originally been of the simplest kind. Livy describes Lucretia as sitting in the midst of her maidens, busily engaged with her spindle, when she was surprised at a late hour of the night, by the appearance of her husband and his friends. Juvenal reminds the ladies of the empire that the matrons of the olden time had hardened their delicate hands with spinning, weaving, and carding wool. In his day, the only spinning-women, he mournfully observes, are the lowest poor, who earn a scanty subsistence under the shelter of the ramparts. Women had thrown aside the housewife's distaff for the dumb-bells, the boxing-gloves, and the foils. Some noble ladies, it is true, still condescended to

superintend their households : they carefully noted the domestic expenses of the day in a private diary, kept a vigilant watch over the steward and the cook, and sentenced every offending servant to the lash of the flagellator. At her toilet, the patrician dame, sitting before her brazen mirror, was generally provided with a whip made of cow-hide, which she applied over the naked shoulders of her trembling tire-woman, if a single hair were turned awry. She practised singing, and gaily struck the lyre, while her slaves, by her order, were, for some petty fault, writhing under the scourge of the tormentor, and their cries and her measured cadences rose discordantly together. The powerful carried these outrages to still greater lengths ; and their poorer neighbours, unprotected by the laws, which recognized might as right, were seized by their obedient slaves, dragged into the streets, beaten with rods and clubs, and sometimes fatally injured, for the mere gratification of their spleen.

By the statutes of the Twelve Tables,

wine, as an intoxicating drink, which led to the most dangerous excesses, was wholly forbidden to women; and, in the first days of the commonwealth, the favourite draught of the Roman matron was milk. This was succeeded by a medium beverage, called *passum*, which was extracted from raisins, and drunk at festivals, or at household merry-makings, as an extraordinary treat. Ultimately the senate enacted a law permitting a moderate indulgence of the juice of the grape to women past their thirtieth year; but the licence once granted, wine was partaken of openly by ladies who were far from claiming that venerable age. The use was soon converted into abuse; and Roman matrons were accused by the spiteful Juvenal of imbibing such deep draughts of Falernian that their delicate mouths, urged irresistibly from within, discharged the surplus quantity in a cascade on the floor, something after the manner of the ancient Egyptian dames, as depicted in the tableaux on their tombs. A flagon of old wine before dinner, was a small measure for one of these fair



bacchanals, and frequently a second pint was drained, not to quench her thirst, but to give a little gentle stimulus to her appetite, that she might discuss her repast with more decided relish.

While the men of Rome were universally tainted with effeminacy, insomuch that even the great Pompey recoiled from touching his flowing hair with his finger for fear of deranging a curl, the women, as before observed, delighted in manly exercises and games. Fencing was an ordinary accomplishment of the leading fashionable ladies of the empire. With their legs sheathed in half-armour, a corslet of steel over their too tender bosoms, a sword-belt round their waists, a helmet on their heads, and gauntlets drawn over their small white hands, they received every morning a lesson from a practised gladiator, who taught them the guard, the lounge, and all the other postures of the martial science. Before them stood a plastron, or wooden figure, which was the object of their hostility, and which, by the time their daily lesson was finished, presented more gashes than the body of Cæsar

At length they threw down the sword, and, weary and jaded, drew over their melting frames a woollen cloak, called an endromis ; and retired exhausted to their boudoirs.

But ladies did not always confine these athletic performances to the practice-room. After a careful training, they made their appearance in public, in the circus or the amphitheatre, as competitors for the prize ; and contended with each other, or even with men, in mortal strife. In the reign of Domitian, ladies actually fought in the arena with wild beasts, and the custom remained in vogue for many years, till the emperor Severus, among other wise reforms of the public morals, enacted a law prohibiting such unseemly spectacles. Matrons, however, were still permitted to box and wrestle, and a lady's black eyes were then understood in a sense very different from what is now expressed by the term.

The toilet of a Roman lady involved an elaborate and very costly process. It commenced at night, when the face, supposed to have been tarnished by exposure, was overlaid with a poultice, composed of boiled

or moistened flour, spread on with the fingers. Poppæan unguents sealed the lips, and the body was profusely rubbed with Cerona ointment. In the morning the poultice and unguents were washed off: a bath of asses milk imparted a delicate whiteness to the skin; and the pale face was freshened and revived with enamel. The full eyelids, which the Roman lady still knows so well how to use—now suddenly raising them, to reveal a glance of surprise, or of melting tenderness, now letting them drop, like a veil, over the lustrous eyes—the full, rounded eyelids were coloured within, and a needle dipped in jetty dye gave length and sphericity to the eyebrows. The forehead was encircled by a wreath, or fillet, fastened in the luxuriant hair, which rose in front in a pyramidal pile, formed of successive ranges of curls, and giving the appearance of more than ordinary height:—

“So high she builds her head, she seems to be,  
View her in front, a tall Andromache;  
But walk all round her, and you’ll quickly find,  
She’s not so great a personage behind.”

Roman ladies frequented the public baths, and it was not unusual for dames of the highest rank to resort to these lavatories in the dead hour of the night. Seated in a palanquin, or sedan, borne by sturdy chairmen, and preceded by slaves bearing flambeaux, they made their way through the deserted streets, delighted to arouse and alarm their neighbours. A close chair conveyed the patrician matron to the spectacles and shows, to which she always repaired in great state, surrounded by her servants and slaves, the dependents of her husband, and the clients of her house, all wearing the badge of the particular faction she espoused. The factions of the circus were four in number, and were distinguished by their respective colours of Blue, Green, White, and Red, to which Domitian, who was a zealous patron of the Circensian games, added the less popular hues of Gold and Purple. But the spectators generally attached themselves either to the Blue or the Green, and the latter was the chief favourite, numbering among its adherents Emperors

and Empresses, senators, knights, and noble dames, as well as the great mass of the people, who, when their champions were defeated, carried their partizanship to such an extreme, that the streets were repeatedly deluged with the blood of the Blues, and more than once, the safety of the state was imperilled by these disgraceful commotions.

The public walks and gardens were a fashionable resort of the Roman ladies. Here they presented themselves in rich costume, which bore testimony alike to the wealth of their husbands, and their own taste. A yellow tie, or hood, partly covered, but did not conceal, their piled hair; their vest of muslin, or sarcenet, clasped with gems, was draped with a murry-coloured robe, descending to their high-heeled Greek boots; necklaces of emerald hung from their swan-like necks, and jewelled ear-rings from their ears. Diamonds glittered on their fingers, and their dazzling complexions were shielded from the sun by a parasol.

Etiquette did not prohibit ladies from stopping in their promenade, and entering

into conversation ; and the incidents of the day, the latest performance at the circus or the amphitheatre, the newest ode of Horace, or the last satire of the wicked story-telling Juvenal, the caustic Persius, or the bitter Lucilius, furnished abundant topics for discourse. Evermore, too, there was some new, and, alas ! some dreadful scandal on the town, which loosened the tongues of both rich and poor. Then there were fashions to discuss, costumes to examine and criticise, ladies' charms to survey, and—task too easy for experienced matrons!—to pull to pieces. Themes of a more abstruse character were selected by some of the sex—the blue-stockings of the age, who were especially singled out for the poet's ire:—

“ ————She is more intolerable yet,  
Who plays the critic when at table set ;  
Calls Virgil charming, and attempts to prove  
Poor Dido right, in venturing all for love.  
From Maro and Mæonides she quotes  
The striking passages, and, while she notes  
Their beauties and defects, adjusts her scales,  
And accurately weighs which bard prevails.  
Th' astonished guests sit mute : grammarians yield,  
Loud rhetoricians, baffled, quit the field.”

But the social meetings of the Romans were not strange to the gifts and accomplishments which more particularly appertain to women; and the high-born maiden, as a part of her education, was carefully instructed in music, singing, and dancing, and required to display her grace and her efficiency on festive occasions. Horace mentions the flute as one of the instruments played by women; but their performances were usually confined to the lyre and harp. Women of the humbler class, after a regular course of instruction, could obtain a livelihood on the stage, and in the time of Horace, three famous and accomplished actresses—Origo, Cytheris, and Arbascula, all remarkable for their charms and their genius, were the reigning toasts of Rome.

Amidst the follies, the vices, and the crimes of the empire, one figure stands out, in bright relief, from the universal social demoralization, and exhibits the character of woman in a beautiful and sublime light. Zenobia, wife of Odenathus, King of Palmyra, united to singular personal beauty all

the high and engaging qualities of the heart—the virtues of the wife and mother with the stern chivalry of the heroine. Her dark complexion was tinged with a warm red, softened by the light of her beaming eyes; her teeth glistened like pearls; and the ear was enchained by the melting sweetness of her voice. The city of Palmyra, an oasis amidst the sands of Arabia—a gem in the desert, was the favourite residence of Zenobia and her husband, the seat of their government, and the capital of their dominions. Groves of stately palms overshadowed the streets of this delightful town; and cool fountains, fed by springs, threw up their waters in perpetual jets, which at once supplied the necessities of the residents, and quenched the thirst of the jaded traveller. Palaces and temples, adorned by the hand of Grecian art, presented themselves at conspicuous points; a theatre was provided for the dramas of Sophocles; and baths for the health and comfort of the people. Deprived by assassination of the consort she so tenderly loved, Zenobia here assumed the



sceptre of the East, seized and executed the assassin, reduced the disobedient to order, and, though surrounded by difficulties, guided the shattered bark of the State through every danger. In this task she was assisted by the advice and influence of the gifted Longinus, her friend and preceptor, under whose tutelage she had become mistress of several languages, and acquired a profound knowledge of the philosophy of Greece. But such pursuits, while they refined, did not relax or enervate her character, and, after spending an allotted portion of the day in literary studies, she threw by the pen for the sword, and underwent the rude training of a soldier. The very habiliments of her sex were discarded, and, attired in a military costume, she appeared on her Arab charger in the midst of her troops, or marched on foot at their head. She personally encountered the Emperor Aurelian in two pitched battles, fought respectively at Antioch and Emessa, and in both was victorious, till her soldiers, carried away by their ardour, were destroyed by a masterly

ambuscade. Driven from the field, she took refuge in Palmyra, and scornfully rejecting an offer of terms, defended her desert city with inflexible courage. But reduced to the last ebb, and finding that Aurelian, instead of losing strength, had received large reinforcements, and an inexhaustible store of supplies, the intrepid Queen resolved to seek safety in flight. The step, however, was not destined to be fortunate. Sixty miles from Palmyra, as she was about to ford the broad channel of the Euphrates, she was surrounded by the light cavalry of Aurelian, and the fair sovereign of the East became the captive of Rome.

Would that the story of her life might end here, but to the tale of woman's heroism, we must add the moral of woman's weakness. In the presence of the Emperor, surrounded by his scowling myrmidons, and with the tumultuous cries and threats of the soldiers ringing in her ear, the trembling Zenobia forgot that she was herself a Queen. After a moment of dignified firmness, she no longer concealed her terror, but sought

to excuse her own temerity by denouncing her friends. Longinus, who had so zealously devoted himself to her cause, was among the number thus accused, and, condemned by Aurelian, died majestically on the scaffold, while his unhappy pupil was reserved to walk in the Emperor's triumph, a chained and degraded captive, through the streets of Rome.

So fallen was the character of the Romans, that they could contemplate and applaud an ovation, in which the principal figure was a vanquished Queen, whose only crime was her heroism and her virtues. But this incident was not forgotten by fate, when achieving a tardy revenge; and the ascendancy of the imperial city, so long on the decline, was ultimately assailed by a more formidable enemy, whom an injured and oppressed woman called to its gates.

Honoria, the sister of Valentinian, a princess endowed with every personal attraction, was educated in the citadel palace of Ravenna, where the fears of the craven Emperor had provided for himself and his

family an inaccessible retreat. Promoted while a child to the rank of Augusta, it was thought that her exalted position would raise her above the solicitations, or even the ambition, of the highest subject, and so prevent her forming an alliance which, in her royal brother's estimation, would be dangerous to the peace and security of the crown. But these hopes were frustrated by the discovery, through her maternal position, of her attachment for Eugenius, her chamberlain ; and the unhappy princess was hurried away, in her sixteenth year, to the distant shores of the Bosphorus, and there immured in the cell of a nun. For fourteen years she remained in this situation, when she conceived the bold design of dispatching a messenger to Attila, King of the Huns, with an offer of her hand, her patrimony, and her imperial rights, which she invited him to claim from the Emperor and senate of Rome. The lover she thus invoked was the most odious and cruel of the barbarian enemies of her country. "Scourge of God" was the impious title which this monster in

human form delighted to bear, and it was his constant boast that the grass never grew where his horse had trod. His personal appearance, while it indicated his Tartar origin, bespoke the savage ferocity of his habits and disposition. His dark, tanned complexion kindled under the flash of his small, fierce, indented eyes, which, he failed not to observe, struck terror into the beholder; his nose was broad and flat; his mouth large, and a bunch of stunted hairs, sprinkled over his chin, offered a poor apology for a beard. The murder of his brother Bleda inaugurated the long series of atrocities which have stamped his name on the page of history in characters of blood, and lead us to the awful conclusion, accepted and believed by himself, that he was one of the five conquerors so emphatically foretold in the prophecies of the Revelation. The terrible names of Alaric, Genseric, Tamerlane, and Zenghis may assuredly be received as denoting the others.

Humanity, indeed, after an interval of a thousand years, looks back with a shudder at the fearful ravages of these bloody-minded

men, and we may truly exclaim that "except the Lord had shortened those days, no flesh should be saved." The fate of woman during this period surpassed anything that we can now imagine, and was such as, though it could not soften man, might almost have moved fiends to pity. It is difficult to realise the devastation and destruction which was spread over the fairest and most fruitful regions of Asia, Africa, and Europe. "In those desert countries," says St. Jerome, "*nothing was left except the sky and the earth ;* and after the destruction of cities and the extirpation of the human race, the land was overgrown with thick forests and inextricable brambles, and the universal desolation announced by the prophet Zephaniah, was accomplished *in the scarcity of the beasts, the birds, and even of the fish.*"

Alaric, King of the Goths, was the first to overrun and devastate the classic soil of Italy. His irruption was repelled, after several fierce battles, by the intrepid Stilicho, who still supported the renown of the Roman name. The Burgundians, the Suevi, and the Vandals, aided by the savage

horsemen of the Alani, and ruthless swarms from the shores of the Baltic, next made their appearance in the passes of the Alps, and followed the banner of their brutal chief, Rhadagast, to the gates of Florence. Here they were assailed by Stilicho, who, after a sanguinary engagement, cut their proudest battalions in pieces, and captured and beheaded their King. But the death of the Roman general removed the great barrier to the subjugation of his country; and Alaric, reinforced by auxiliary and dependent tribes, marched in irresistible strength through the desolated peninsula, and pitched his tent on the banks of the Tiber. His lines were soon extended round the whole circumference of the city, which covered an area of twenty-one miles, and the miserable inhabitants, twelve hundred thousand in number, cut off from all communication with the surrounding country, and but ill-supplied with provisions, were doomed to sustain a protracted siege. The ordinary articles of food were quickly exhausted; horse-flesh rose into a sumptuous delicacy, only obtainable by the rich, and so frightful was the famine,

that human beings fed on the bodies of their fellow-creatures. A still darker crime, foretold as a special incident of the siege of Jerusalem, is attributed to this fatal epoch; and Roman mothers are accused of having outraged the first laws of nature, by feasting on the bodies of their murdered children. Nor were the barbarities and impious excesses of the time confined to individuals. A sudden rumour that the venerable Serena, a princess of the royal house of Theodosius, and the widow of Stilicho, who had been twice saluted as the Deliverer of Italy, was in secret correspondence with the enemy, exasperated and maddened both the soldiery and the populace. While the unhappy lady was yet unconscious of her danger, her palace was surrounded by the clamorous multitude; the emissaries of the senate burst into her chamber; and without listening to her defence, without inquiring into her guilt, consigned her to the hands of the public executioner. The mob learnt, with a yell of triumph, that the innocent object of their hostility had been strangled.



We must pass by the horrors of the sack, when the pitiless army of Alaric gained possession of the city ; for though the narrative is not untinged with woman's heroism, it is too deeply coloured by her wrongs. Many, indeed, perished by their own hand, to escape a fate still more terrible, and not a few fell in a wholesale and indiscriminate massacre. Yet the Goths were not inaccessible to gentler impulses ; and an instance is recorded of a barbarian youth, who, in the height of the sack, was so touched by the heroism of a Roman lady, that he generously took her under his protection, conveyed her to a place of refuge, and afterwards delivered her uninjured to her husband.

The invasion of Attila found a specious pretext in the peremptory refusal of the hand of Honoria, for which a forced marriage with a nominal husband was urged as an excuse. But the pusillanimous Emperor and abject senate, while they clung to the tradition of past greatness, abdicated their functions at the first approach of the invader. Terrible indeed was the warning

which every breeze wafted before his blood-stained banner ; and, on the very threshold of Italy, the proud cities of Aquileia, Vicenza, Verona, and Bergamo, were converted by his hordes into heaps of stones. But as he came in sight of the venerable walls of Rome, his march was arrested, not by an army, but by a Christian bishop, who, with words of peace and amity, backed by rich gifts from the altars of the church, and a promise of the hand of Honoria, adjured the self-dubbed Scourge of God to abandon the threatened assault. The sagacious Leo touched at once the chords of superstition, the feelings of ambition and vanity, and the more sordid impulses of avarice in the steel breast of the Hun ; and Attila furled his standard, when he was reminded that Alaric, in the plenitude of his power, expiated by a premature death his desecration of Rome. Soon he was on his way to the frontier, though vehemently declaring that he would exact a fearful revenge, if he were not speedily recognised as the husband of Honoria.

Another bride awaited the conqueror at

his rude palace on the Danube. Ildico, a Roman maiden of enchanting beauty, torn from her home and her betrothed lover, was here united to the savage enemy of her country and her sex. A night of intemperance and brutal riot was succeeded by a serene day, which, to the superstitious Huns, had something awful in its impassive calm. The King's chamber, to which he had been conducted with such noisy shouts, remained closed, darkened, and silent. At length, his impatient chiefs began to clamour without; the unguarded door was flung open; and they beheld on the gorgeous nuptial couch the lifeless body of him, who, but the day before, had made the world tremble. A blood-vessel had broken on his lungs, and the fierce Attila had reached the marriage-chamber only to fall dead at the feet of his bride.

While the chief of the Huns had been urged to invade Italy by the entreaties and attractions of the princess Honoria, Genseric, King of the Vandals—a barbarian, if possible, more cruel and more implacable—

received a similar invitation from the Empress Eudoxia. The weak and guilty Valentinian had conceived a violent passion for the wife of Petronius Maximus, a lady not more distinguished for her beauty than her virtue, and who, unmoved by the splendid rank of her lover, treated his overtures with indignant scorn. In an unfortunate moment, Maximus, indulging in the prevailing rage for play, lost a considerable sum to Valentinian, and, with a rude jest, the Emperor demanded his signet ring as a pledge for its payment. This he despatched to the lady in the name of her husband, requiring her immediate attendance at the palace, and the wretched Maximus, on his return home, learnt the full extent of his misfortune. Smothering his resentment, he waited patiently for an opportunity of revenge, and an occasion soon presented itself, when Valentinian, stained with the blood of the illustrious Ætius, and branded with a thousand crimes, was assassinated on the field of Mars. The clamorous shouts of the soldiery bestowed the vacant diadem on Maximus, who, bearing an irreproachable

character, was equally acceptable to the senate and the people. His injured wife, whose fate had impelled him to such a bloody course, did not live to witness his elevation, and he was no sooner invested with the purple, than he forcibly espoused the Empress Eudoxia, the widow of the murdered Valentinian. This was the outrage that provoked Eudoxia to appeal to the doubtful magnanimity of Genseric, who, after ravaging the fairest provinces of Europe, from the Baltic to the Mediterranean, had waded through a sea of blood to the throne of Carthage. The Vandal tyrant had before cast a longing eye towards Italy, and now hastened to obey a summons which enrolled him as the champion and defender of a woman and an Empress. Maximus would not idly have awaited his approach, could he have commanded the adhesion and support of a loyal people, but his appearance in public was the signal for an insurrection, in which, through the treachery of his attendants, the partisans and creatures of Eudoxia, he fell a victim to the fury of the populace. Eudoxia

herself, accompanied by her two youthful daughters, advanced to meet the invader, while the city, in spite of the mediation of the great Leo, who again endeavoured to appease and conciliate the conqueror, was given up to the unsparing pillage of the Vandals. The riches of Rome were hastily accumulated; the churches were stripped of their treasures, including the sacred vessels of the temple of Jerusalem, which, in a prouder and brighter age, had been deposited in the capital by Titus; and the whole was immediately embarked in the crowded transports of Genseric. A still more humiliating portion of the spoil was a mournful throng of women, the wives and daughters of the degenerate Romans, conveyed in shameful bondage to the shores of Africa; and among these miserable captives were Eudoxia and her daughters, the descendants of the great Theodosius, and the empress and coheirs of the civilized world.

END OF VOL. I.

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